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THE VOICE OF BRITISH MOTORSPORT

MOTORSPORT NEWS

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WRC IS REBOOTED!



Elfyn Evans has his eyes firmly set on maiden World title

Welshman wants to run at the front throughout the 13-round contest

EVANS: WINS WILL BE THE BEDROCK OF WRC TITLE CHARGE

By Graham Lister

Toyota star Elfyn Evans is determined to iron out any mid-year lulls as he aims to secure his maiden World Rally Championship crown.

The Yaris driver has finished as runner-up in the last two seasons and is determined to take advantage of the WRC's new hybrid era and capitalise on a part-season from his team-mate and reigning champion Sebastien Ogier.

The 33-year-old Evans said: "While I feel I was quite consistent you have to be consistently winning to fight for the title. "But with the new cars we have it will be more of a challenge to have the car

working well on every single round and there will be more unknowns. We won't be taking anything for granted and I think the workload will be even higher this year." **Full story, page seven**

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INSIGHT

WHEN BLACKPOOL TOOK ON LE MANS

TVR's epic tale of the 2003 endurance classic **p29**



REPORT

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Fiesta man rules the Tarmac at Brands **p32**



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COMMENT

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Ready for the off: The WRC runners assemble before the Monte Carlo Rally 2022

THE WRC HYBRID FUTURE IS HERE

What makes motorsport more exciting than any other sport are the unknowns. And the 2022 World Rally Championship entrants are facing more unknowns than they have in more than three decades.

The hybrid generation is here and when the WRC runners take to the Luceram to Lantosque stage in the south of France on Thursday evening they will be making history with the first generation of machines that will have added electrical power to assist the traditional internal combustion-engined motivation.

There will be many lessons learned along the way as motorsport goes green. The reliability of the new-for-2022 cars will be front and centre as the engineers learn all about their new machines and we sincerely hope that mechanical dramas aren't the main headline of the competition – although it is understandable to think that they might creep in, particularly in the opening rounds. The focus will be on rallying's brave new world this weekend, and the world will be watching.

Let's hope, too, that with three home-spun talents in top seats – Elfyn Evans at Toyota plus Craig Breen and Gus Greensmith at M-Sport – rallying itself can find some room to breathe in the mainstream media too. Success for any one of these three should push rallying back on to the sports pages of the national newspapers. That has to be good for everyone.

As well as our bumper WRC preview in this issue, we also trace the history of what is rapidly becoming one of the most intense rivalries in Formula 1's backstory: the fight for supremacy between Max Verstappen and Lewis Hamilton. James Roberts picks out the flashpoints that have made this a battle to savour.

Paul Lawrence looks at the epic and previously untold story of TVR's attempt at Le Mans with its Tuscan in 2003 in a tale which shows that no stone was left unturned in an effort to get at least one of its cars to the finish.

We also carry a report from the popular Motorsport News Circuit Rally Championship encounter from Brands Hatch, where Frank Bird once again showed his class. While the result was hardly in doubt, the sight of rally cars tackling Paddock Hill Bend in the uphill direction is always a thrill.

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Bird keeps up the momentum at Brands Hatch

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RACING NEWS

Photos: Motorsport Images

MASERATI TO JOIN FORMULA E GRID IN 2023

Legendary motorsport marque Maserati will return to front-line competition when it joins the Formula E grid from 2023.

The Italian brand went through a change of ownership in 2021 to the Stellantis automotive group and the firm has pledged \$30 million to invest in electrification. The company will launch an all-electric version of the MC20 sports car in 2025.

Speaking to media last week, Maserati boss Davide Grasso said: "The Maserati brand is going back to the future, going back to its roots of racing. I'm extremely happy and excited to announce that Maserati is the first Italian brand to join the Formula E championship from 2023, season nine."

Alejandro Agag, the boss of Formula E, said Maserati's decision was momentous for the all-electric World Championship. "The incredible history that Maserati has, to have this brand come into the Formula E championship, into the electric revolution that we're pushing, is really an incredible moment for Formula E."

Maserati has not been present in top-level single-seater competition since it quit Formula 1 in 1957.



Hamilton is still disillusioned



Abu Dhabi result upset the Mercedes driver

HAMILTON WAITS ON FIA BEFORE DECIDING ON HIS FORMULA 1 FUTURE

Briton wants to see what action governors take before making 2022 commitment

By Matt James

Seven-time F1 World champion Lewis Hamilton will determine his future in grand prix racing in February after the sport's governors have conducted a review into last season's Abu Dhabi Grand Prix.

Mercedes racer Hamilton felt the result of the final race of 2021 had been "manipulated" as safety car rules were interpreted in an unusual way by race director Michael Masi. The controversy ultimately led to Hamilton losing the crown to Red Bull's race winner Max Verstappen on the final lap of the race in the Middle East.

Hamilton has remained tight-lipped since the December 12 showdown. His Mercedes team, led by Toto Wolff, initially declared that it would protest the result but has since backed off on this stance, although it admits that its star

driver is "disillusioned" with Formula 1 as a result of the controversy. Hamilton is contracted to the German team until 2023.

Hamilton and Wolff declined to attend the FIA Prize Giving Ceremony in December and initially it was suggested that both would be penalised for the snub, although no further news has been forthcoming regarding this censure.

New FIA boss Mohammed Ben Sulayem has clarified the process of an investigation by the sport's rulers. The details are set out in the sidebar and it means that Hamilton will not make a final decision on his return until at least the middle of February.

The first pre-season Formula 1 test is scheduled to take place in Barcelona on February 23-25, while the entry will then move on to the Sakhir circuit on March 10-12. The 2022 Formula 1 season is due to kick off in Bahrain on March 20.

THE FIA STATEMENT IN FULL

"Following the decision to the World Motor Sport Council in Paris on December 15 2021, the FIA administration, under the leadership of Mohammed Ben Sulayem, has started the detailed analysis of the events of the last Formula 1 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix.

"The FIA president [will] launch a consultation with all F1 teams on various issues, including this one. On January 19, an item on the agenda of the Sporting Advisory Committee will be dedicated to the use of the safety car. The

following stage will be a shared discussion with all F1 drivers.

"The outcome of the detailed analysis will be presented to the F1 Commission in February and final decisions will be announced at the World Motor Sport Council in Bahrain on March 18.

"FIA president Mohammed Ben Sulayem has asked secretary general sport and recently-appointed single-seater director Peter Bayer for proposals to review and optimise the organisation of the FIA F1 structure for the 2022 season."



Krack had worked with Sauber

NEW MAN KRACK TO HEAD UP ASTON'S F1 ATTACK

Aston Martin's new Formula 1 team principal has been named as former BMW Motorsport man Mike Krack.

He will replace Otmar Szafnauer, who departed the Silverstone-based team earlier this month after 12 years with the squad. Krack has previously worked with Porsche as part of its senior management team before joining Sauber, which became BMW Sauber, and he worked alongside current Aston Martin F1 driver Sebastian Vettel when the

German joined the grand prix grid in 2007.

Krack will report to Martin Whitmarsh, who is Aston's group CEO alongside team owner Lawrence Stroll.

Whitmarsh said: "Having worked in very senior motorsport positions at both BMW and Porsche, backed by an engineering background in F1 with Sauber, Mike possesses a blend of experience and expertise that makes him the ideal choice for us. He works well with drivers, having prioritised that aspect of

his role at BMW in recent years, and also with engineers, since he speaks their language."

BMW has named Andreas Roos as its new head of motorsport programmes, starting from February 1. Aston has revealed that it will launch its 2022 challenger on February 10.

Alpine has parted ways with executive director Marcin Budkowski, which is expected to free up a role for Otmar Szafnauer to join the team for 2022.



Rossi will switch to GT attack

VILLENEUVE TARGETS ANOTHER SHOT AT DAYTONA 500 GLORY

Formula 1 World champion Jacques Villeneuve will attempt to qualify for the Daytona 500 NASCAR showpiece next month.

The Canadian, the 1997 world beater, attempted to qualify for the Florida event in 2008 but was ruled out by a crash in the qualifying races. He has recently tested the Next Gen NASCAR for the new Team Hezeberg squad, created by racer Toine Hezemans and entrepreneur Ernst Berg to feed European talent from the NASCAR

Whelan Euro Series across the Atlantic.

As a new team, Team Hezeberg lacks one of the multi-million dollar charters that guarantees a grid spot. Villeneuve must show strong speed in qualifying or progress through the qualifying races to start in NASCAR's blue riband event, when it takes place on February 20.

Villeneuve, 50, said: "It's a very special race to take part in and it's hard to get in the show when you have to qualify on time or run the duel [125-mile qualifying races]. It makes it more stressful."



Villeneuve last attempted to reach the Daytona 500 in 2008, above

MONTOYA RETURNS FOR HAT-TRICK INDY 500 BID WITH McLAREN

Juan Pablo Montoya will bid to complete a hat-trick of Indy 500 victories after confirming a deal to return to the Brickyard with the Arrow McLaren SP team.

The 46-year-old will join regular drivers Pato O'Ward and Felix Rosenqvist for two races in Indiana: the road course race on May 14 and the 500-mile showpiece

on May 29. McLaren boss Zak Brown said: "Juan Pablo is an institution in motorsport, with two Indianapolis 500 victories and an impressive Formula 1 career with multiple wins for McLaren.

"He adds experience that benefits our team, giving us a driver with the potential to win anytime he steps into the car."

Montoya, who won the Indy in 2000 and

2015, finished ninth when driving for the McLaren Arrow SP team in the 500 in 2021.

The driver said: "I had a great experience with the team last year and look forward to building on the progress we made in 2021. I think we have a real shot at competing at the front of the field and challenging for the win."



JP Montoya was ninth in 2001

ROSSI LINKS UP WITH WRT FOR GT WORLD CHALLENGE

Nine-time MotoGP title winner Valentino Rossi will race for a full season in the GT World Challenge Europe in 2022 in both the endurance and sprint divisions in a WRT Audi R8.

The Italian, who was due to take part in the recent Gulf 12 Hours in a Ferrari but was ruled out by Covid, will tackle all 10 rounds for the Belgian team, including the Spa 24 Hours. The opening round of the Sprint schedule is due to take place at Brands Hatch on April 30-May 1. No team-mates for Rossi have been announced to date.

Rossi said: "I am delighted to join Team WRT for a full GT World Challenge Europe programme. Everybody knows that I have been a great car racing fan and that I have always been interested in racing on four wheels once my MotoGP career would come to an end.

"Now I am available to devote myself to a car racing programme at a high level and with the right professional approach."



The Parker pair press on

JONES AND MALVERN
STAY IN BRITISH GT

Nick Jones, Scott Malvern and Team Parker Racing will compete together in the British GT championship for a sixth-consecutive season this year after confirming an unchanged Porsche GT3 entry.

The 2018 GT4 Pro-Am champion effort for 2020 stepped up from GT4 to GT3 then for 2021 switched from a Bentley to the Porsche 911. During last year Jones and Malvern in the 911 showed good pace and progress that didn't get its due reward in results. Malvern though claimed pole position at Oulton Park in the penultimate round of the season and he with Jones finished third during the same double-header meeting.

Jones said: "Stuart [Parker, team boss] always makes it a welcoming environment so it's like going to spend the weekend with your mates more than anything else. I am more than ready for it [the season]."

"I'd like to be a bit more competitive this year and find that little bit of pace so we can get closer to the sharp end of what could be a seriously competitive grid. We have a lot more experience with the car which will help to make a big difference and hopefully it pays off when we get going."

TEAM ABBA NEARY
PAIR BACK FOR '22

Rapid father-and-son duo Richard and Sam Neary will continue in British GT this season in their family-run Team Abba Mercedes GT3 effort.

The Silver-Am pair last year burst through to become regular British GT frontrunners. They took their first race win, at Donington Park, and could have been overall title contenders without incidents and bad luck. They did however bag 2021's GT Cup championship.

Richard said: "Last year I think our performances made a few people sit up and take notice of what a family team can achieve in British GT. We don't have the time or budget to test as much as some of the other guys so it's always really satisfying when we turn up on a race weekend and achieve good results."

"We had a few too many peaks and troughs last year, which we need to iron out. But if we can do that and grab a win or two along the way then we can certainly aim for a top-three championship finish."



Father-son duo continue

TOMLINSON AND WHEELER JUNIOR
COMBINE FOR GINETTA GT4 ASSETTO

Next generation of famous names Ginetta and TVR will pair in all-teenage Silver Cup duo

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Praga



Sons of famous fathers race G56

By Graham Keilloh

Two notable motorsport families will combine in British GT this season with fellow Ginetta Junior graduates Freddie Tomlinson and Joe Wheeler pairing to contest the GT4 contest with Aspetto Motorsport.

The duo have known each other since early childhood due to their fathers' friendship: Ginetta is owned by Lawrence

Tomlinson's LNT Group while the late Peter Wheeler oversaw TVR. Both outfits have rich British GT heritage.

Now Freddie and Joe, both aged 17, will share Aspetto's Ginetta G56 in 2022 in a Silver Cup entry.

The car made its debut last year and Aspetto's Mark Sansom and Charlie Robertson narrowly missed debut victory at Brands Hatch due to a late puncture.

Tomlinson and Wheeler

finished ninth and 10th respectively in 2021's Ginetta Junior standings. The latter remains with Aspetto for a third season while Tomlinson switches from R Racing.

Tomlinson said: "Ginetta is synonymous with GT4 so to represent my family's company in British GT – just as my father did – will be a really proud moment. But Joe and I are also here to do a job."

"After a few years in Juniors we feel ready for the next step,

despite being one of if not the youngest crew on the grid.

"We've known each other since we were toddlers but this is the first time that we'll have worked together in a motorsport environment. I'm really looking forward to that aspect of it."

Wheeler added: "Perhaps some people will focus on Freddie's Ginetta links but I think my existing relationship with Aspetto will also prove invaluable this year."



Tomlinson: pairing with pal



Randall (c) extends Praga link up in UK

VR MOTORSPORT EXTENDS
PRAGA UK RELATIONSHIP

VR Motorsport has renewed its role as official UK Praga R1 dealer and as Praga Racing UK will exclusively represent the UK and Ireland on Praga's new global dealer network.

The network – which spearheads Praga's global motorsport expansion – already includes Praga Racing ANZ covering Australia and New Zealand, Praga Racing Benelux for

Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg, and Praga Racing California. Poland and UAE dealers will be announced shortly.

VR Motorsport has been Praga's official UK dealer since 2019 and its owner Vincent Randall has a long-standing relationship with Praga as one of the UK's first R1 owners. Randall with VR Motorsport has since played a crucial role

in the high-performance R1's proliferation on UK race tracks, and the car gets its first one-make championship this year in the UK.

Praga Cars UK managing director Mark Harrison said: "[Randall is] a perfect fit as the official UK dealer. When it comes to purchasing a race car like the R1, in-depth knowledge of the car's capabilities and technicalities are essential."

YOUNGSTER LOCKWOOD
TARGETS MINI JCW TOP THREE

Mini Challenge youngster Jason Lockwood is targeting a top-three championship finish after confirming he'll continue on the JCW grid in 2022 with defending champion Excler8 Motorsport.

The 20-year-old is set for his third JCW season, all of which have been with Excler8. Having graduated from karts, he took third place in the Rookie Cup in 2020 while last year he finished seventh in the overall standings but with the field's third-best qualifying average.

Lockwood said: "There were a lot of positives to take away from 2021 and I worked hard to iron out

some of the problems I faced early on. I want to build on that and improve this year, and I'm looking to try and finish the season in the podium places."

Three new drivers meanwhile have been confirmed for 2021's Mini Challenge Trophy. Mad4Mini Motorsport will expand to a two-car programme with series rookie and karting graduate Lauren Tayla joining team regular Morgan Wroot. And British-Canadian teenager Sophie Wright has joined AReeve Motorsport for her first taste of competitive racing half a year on from her first trackday.



Twenty-year-old Lockwood wants to build on promising '21

RACING NEWS

IN BRIEF

Hutchison role

The British Automobile Racing Club has appointed John Hutchison as its new event manager. Hutchison previously worked at the Classic Sports Car Club, Aston Martin Owners Club and the MG Car Club. He will work under sporting manager Mark Turner and alongside fellow event manager David Wheadon and will play a hands-on role in organising race meetings.

Dall'Occo in

Catherine Dall'Occo has joined Castle Combe Racing Club as its new racing co-ordinator. In the role, Dall'Occo will combine her experience in the prestige automotive and hospitality sectors. She said: "My passion for delivering exceptional and memorable experiences has always been central to my philosophy."

United round

United Formula Ford's inaugural 2022 calendar has been completed with a Snetterton visit on Saturday June 11. The initial provisional seven-round calendar, for James Beckett's new contest for all ages of FF1600 car, included a TBC slot with an either/or June date.

Compact chief

Clive Brookson has taken over as BMW Compact Cup championship coordinator for 2022 onwards. Charlotte White will continue to work alongside him and outgoing coordinator Greg Graham is also remaining to offer support when required.

Marshal money

Sim racing group British Sim Racers has donated £570 to the British Motorsports Marshals Club after hosting a three-hour Brands Hatch sim race last month. Over 40 cars took part in the event and the donation will be used for marshal recruitment and training.



Revamped British F4 is set to build on 2021's grids

Contest has new chassis



Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Edward Beadel of Astracolour Ltd

BRITISH F4 CONFIDENT OF "AT LEAST 20 CARS" FOR 2022

Technical boss of the revamped junior championship expects a turnout boost from '21

By Graham Keillor

British Formula 4's technical boss John Ryan has said he is confident that the revamped junior single-seater championship will have an improved grid of at least 20 cars this season.

British F4's grids in 2021 peaked

at 19 while in the campaign's latter part 16 or 17 cars was its typical turnout. Currently seven teams are signed to compete in 2022's contest, up from five for most of last year.

British F4 has a new chassis-engine combination from 2022 of the Tatuus-Abarth rather than Mygale-Ford, plus a new tyre

supplier in Pirelli and a new organiser in governing body Motorsport UK.

Motorsport UK's sport, safety and technical director Ryan told Motorsport News: "It's still early days to confirm the line-up, but it's looking promising. I know drivers who are looking to come into the fold, and we're feeling quite

comfortable that we're going to have at least 20 in the first season which is fantastic, especially with a new car and with everything that's going on with Covid etc.

"There's a lot of interest as well from some of the overseas competitors. Formula 4 historically has attracted overseas competitors but now it becomes even more

attractive as a proposition. We're building to hopefully be the best championship to go to for Formula 4 across the world. That's our ambition. We know a lot of people of recent past often gravitate to things like the Italian championship who do a very good job. We're trying to understand where the differences are."

GBR AND ROSSOVERDE TAKE GB4 TEAMS TO 13

Graham Brunton Racing and Rossoverde Racing have taken the number of squads intending to participate in this year's inaugural GB4 championship to 13 after becoming the latest to confirm entries.

Famous Scottish-based Formula Ford squad GBR is set for a two-car effort and will shortly confirm its first driver signing.

The team raced in GB3's predecessor BRDC F4 in 2015 with Ciaran Haggerty taking fifth overall in the standings, and the squad has a long history

of aiding the development of young Scottish drivers.

GBR team manager Craig Brunton said: "Our current FF1600 cars are great training for young drivers cutting their teeth and we feel the Tatuus chassis [in GB4] offers the perfect next step."

Three-time Indianapolis 500 winner Dario Franchitti added on Twitter: "Fantastic to see my friends GBR on the grid for the GB4 championship in 2022. A cracking team who put absolutely everything into running up front."

Edinburgh-based Rossoverde's exploits stretch back to 1972, and the team was a long-time British GT frontrunner with the iconic pairing of team owner Hector Lester and the late Allan Simonsen. Rossoverde's alumni also includes Eddie Irvine and Gordon Shedden.

Rossoverde team principal Christian Lester said: "Rossoverde Racing recognises the GB4 championship as a key series that will promote and encourage talent to progress towards FIA F3 and F2."



GBR has joined GB4 to give young drivers a new step



First electric junior single-seater series has its '22 dates

ERA JOINS ETCR FOR DEBUT SEASON THIS YEAR

The world's first all-electric junior formula series the ERA championship's inaugural 2022 five-round calendar will take place on the FIA ETCR eTouring Car World Cup package.

ERA, conceived as an accessible entry-level electric single-seater contest, will make its debut at Istanbul's Beyoglu street circuit on May 20-22. FIA ETCR is rebranded from Pure ETCR

Each ERA meeting will feature

free practice, two qualifying sessions and two sprint races, with a field of 10 Mitsu-Bachi F110e single-seaters capable of top speeds around 130mph. The car in advance of its race debut also gets a demo run-out in ETCR's 2022 Pau season-opener.

Highlights of every race will be broadcast on the following Tuesday on Eurosport in more than 70 countries in Europe and the Asia-Pacific region. Details of

ERA's live broadcasts will be revealed at a later date.

ERA's sporting director Beth Georgiou said: "From the outset, we have had a very clear shared aim [with ETCR] to promote electric racing and offer exciting, accessible electric motorsport for teams, drivers and fans. It is clear that electric racing is an increasingly attractive option and we only see that going in one direction."

PROVISIONAL CALENDAR

ERA 2022

RND	VENUE	DATE
1	Istanbul, Turkey	May 20-22
2	Hungaroring, Hungary	June 10-12
3	Jarama, Spain	June 17-19
4	Zolder, Belgium	July 8-10*
5	Vallelunga, Italy	July 22-24*

*Subject to agreement with event promoter

BROOKLANDS TV SHOW RETURNS FOR ITS SECOND SERIES NEXT MONTH

The television series based at the renowned Brooklands Museum will return to screens next month with Secrets of the Transport Museum's second series getting underway.

Series two's opening episode will be first broadcast on

Tuesday February 1 at 2000hrs on the Yesterday channel.

The show is filmed at the iconic motorsport and aviation venue in Surrey, the scene of the world's first purpose-built motor racing circuit and host of the first-ever British Grand Prix. The show

brings to life the stories of pioneers past and present linked to Brooklands; the first series launched in March 2020 opened with a consolidated audience of 558,000.

Brooklands Museum CEO Tamalie Newbery said: "Secrets

of the Transport Museum has provided us with a wonderful opportunity to show the world some of the dedicated volunteers we have at the museum, and celebrate the unique stories of British innovation, endeavour and entrepreneurship at Brooklands,

both past and present.

"The huge success of the first series shows how Brooklands continues to resonate with people today as we face the biggest shake-up of the automotive and aviation industry since their inception."



Brooklands is back on box

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RALLY NEWS

BREEN READY TO BOUNCE BACK AFTER TESTING SHUNT

M-Sport man full of hope for 2022 despite pre-Monte Carlo Rally accident with Puma

Photos: Red Bull Content Pool, Motorsport Images, Toyota Gazoo Racing

By Graham Lister

Craig Breen will start Monte Carlo Rally this evening (Thursday) with his confidence “sky high”, despite crashing his Ford Puma Rally1 down a ravine during testing last week.

Breen and co-driver Paul Nagle were uninjured in the accident, which occurred on a test road close to Gap, although a day of testing was lost while the crashed car was recovered and repaired.

Responding to suggestions during last Saturday’s WRC season launch that his confidence had taken a battering, the Irishman said: “It’s sky-high. Honestly speaking I still feel quite good. Perhaps [it was] famous last words, literally the last comment I made to Paul before I set out on that run was ‘everything feels amazing, I feel really confident’ and then that happened.”

Afterwards, the 31-year-old was quick to praise the work of his M-Sport mechanics for their efforts in allowing testing to resume the following day. “The accident was gut-wrenching knowing the effort that had gone into preparing [the

ESSENTIALS

Monte Carlo Rally

January 20-23

WRC round 1/13

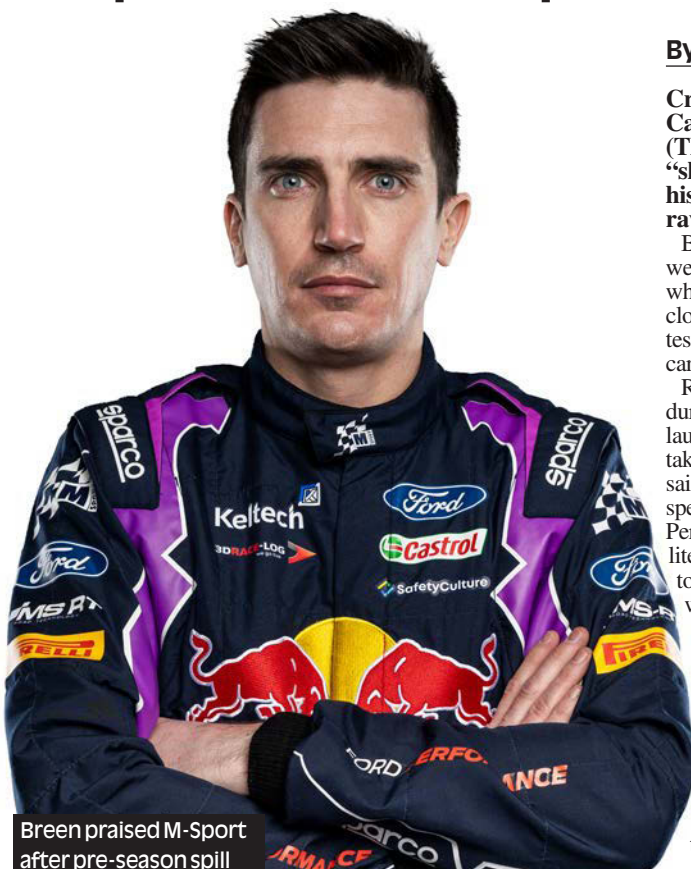
Base: Monaco Surface: Asphalt

Stages: 17 Distance: 183.94 miles

car]. It was something very, very unlucky. It wasn’t like I arrived into a corner a gear too high and ran out of road or something, it was just a series of unfortunate events that led us going off the road.

“The work that has gone into this has been so intense by everybody behind the scenes both in M-Sport, Ford Performance and everyone else involved in the programme. Up until last Wednesday morning everything was perfect, but I have to say on the back of [the crash] these people have amazed me, what they’ve done just building the car, their spirit and their energy that they’ve put in. They pulled a blinder [last week] and amazed me even more.”

Two of Breen’s WRC title rivals, Toyota’s Elfyn Evans and Hyundai’s Thierry Neuville also crashed during pre-season testing last month.



Breen praised M-Sport after pre-season spill



New colour scheme will adorn the Rally1 Ford Puma

New look for M-Sport's Hybrid Puma

M-Sport has gone purple for its 25th season in the World Rally Championship in partnership with Ford.

The Cumbria team reckons its purple-based colour scheme is inspired by the switch to plug-in hybrid power for 2022, going as far to say its “electrifying new look encapsulates the energy of the

team as it heads into the first round”. Yes, really.

And there’s more: “M-Sport’s striking new livery, which combines vibrant shades of purple with the team’s traditional blue palette, marks the change to hybrid with glowing bolts of colour over the body of the car”, the team’s press release states.

EVANS AIMS TO REMOVE THE LOWS FOR WRC TITLE BID

Elfyn Evans says consistency won’t be enough if he’s to stop finishing runner-up in the World Rally Championship.

Welshman Evans placed second to Toyota team-mate Sebastien Ogier in both 2020 and 2021.

But with Ogier going part time in 2022, Evans is being tipped to go one better and become Britain’s first WRC champion since Richard Burns in 2001, although he was quick to dismiss the favourite tag during Saturday’s WRC season launch in Austria.

“It’s so open now, everybody’s starting with new cars from the ground up and we don’t know where we’re going to be and how each driver will take to the new technology,” the 33-year-old said. “There’s [been] some key areas in both

seasons that really let my year down. Last year, especially, I had a run of bad results mid-season and those were what cost my true chance to fight for the championship. Of course, we were still down to the last round but without those poor results mid-year it could have been a very different story.

“While I feel I was quite consistent you have to be consistently winning to fight for the title. That will be the key and the target is always the championship. But with the new cars we have it will be more of a challenge to have the car working well on every single round and there will be more unknowns. We won’t be taking anything for granted and I think the workload will be even higher this year.”



Evans will be aiming to go one better in the title chase in 2022

LOEB PLUGGED IN FOR NEW M-SPORT CHALLENGE

Sebastien Loeb will return to the World Rally Championship on the Monte Carlo Rally today – when he makes his debut for M-Sport in one of the British squad’s Ford Puma Rally1s – less than a week after finishing runner-up on the Dakar.

The nine-time WRC champion came home second to Nasser Al-Attiyah in a Bahrain Raid Xtreme-entered Prodrive Hunter alongside new co-driver Fabian Lurquin.

After completing the two-week event in Saudi Arabia, Loeb said: “At one point it was not looking so good when we had a problem in the third stage, but we finally kept the second place and we pushed hard to try and catch Nasser but he did a perfect race and it was not

possible.” Loeb said. “The car was really good, the partnership with Fabian was really good and everything was fine. The gap was too big [but] to be second on the toughest event in the world is a great achievement.”

BRX team boss David Richards said: “Dakar remains one of the most challenging motorsport events on the planet and considering this is only our second attempt we have to be very proud of what we have achieved. It’s not just about the drivers, who all did a superb job, it’s a team effort and every member of our BRX team contributed to this result.”

Argentine Orlando Terranova finished fourth in another Prodrive Hunter but Nani Roma crashed out of contention in week one.



Matton has now left the FIA

MATTON'S WORK LAUDED AS HE BOWS OUT

The FIA has paid tribute to its former rally department boss Yves Matton, who left the role unexpectedly prior to the Christmas break.

Belgian Matton had held the rally director role since 2018 and the governing

body said he did “great work” during that time.

In a statement, the FIA said: “Under his leadership, the rally department has contributed to a number of successes and significant

achievements across the WRC, regional rally and cross-country categories, including the implementation of the rally pyramid, the move of the FIA World Rally Championship to new

energies, the commitment of the manufacturers to the series’ exciting new hybrid era, and the agreement with ASO, as the Promoter of the inaugural FIA World Rally-Raid Championship.”



Sebastien Loeb is ready for Monte challenge

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RALLY NEWS

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GALWAY BOASTS ALL-STAR ENTRY

Post-Covid revival of Irish Tarmac rallying brings star names to Galway classic



BRC champion Edwards will take on the local boys

By Jason Craig

Any one of seven drivers is being tipped to win this year's Irish Tarmac Championship after the names and numbers for next month's Galway International Rally were published.

No fewer than five Irish champions and the reigning British champion all feature in the 140-strong field for the first round of this year's Irish Tarmac Championship, which takes place on February 5 and 6.

Series returnee Tim McNulty and two-time Galway International winner Garry Jennings will share the stages with Declan Boyle, Donagh Kelly and Josh Moffett in Rally2 and R5 machinery.

Callum Devine, Cathan McCourt, and Welshman Meirion Evans – who is confident of upsetting the order this season aboard his Volkswagen Polo R5 – are some of the other standout names. Another entry is that of three-time British Rally Championship winner Matt Edwards, who will campaign his familiar Polo R5.

Paddy Flanagan, the Irish Tarmac Rally Championship manager, told Motorsport News: "I speak for everyone associated with the Tarmac Championship when I say I am delighted with the response for Galway."

"We all knew this was going to be a good year, but I honestly don't think anyone could have predicted such high numbers and such a strong calibre of drivers for the first round of the new season - it is great."

"There is absolutely no doubt about it: this year has the potential to be one of the best we have seen in a very long time," added Flanagan, who takes on the role for an eighth-consecutive season.

"With the names that are starting in Galway, this is a championship fight that could go any one of six or seven ways. I think everyone has every right to be incredibly excited about 2022."



Hirst converts to R5 Fiesta

BTRDA REGULAR HIRST JOINS THE R5 CLUB

BTRDA frontrunner Matthew Hirst has become the latest driver to acquire an R5 car, buying the Ford Fiesta R5 that Callum Black used in last year's series.

Since he began competing in 2016, Hirst has remained loyal to the Mitsubishi Lancer E9.

"It's something we've discussed for a long time and planned on doing," Hirst told MN, "it kind of felt like there was unfinished business with the Evo, especially with George Lepley in an Evo last year. Why rush it? What's the point of jumping in [an R5] too soon?"

Hirst has drove the car at Blyton just before Christmas and managed to obtain some tips from Marty McCormack who was there helping another driver with some tuition. Hirst added: "It was a bit of a surprise to see Marty there! He enjoyed it, he said we were pushing so that's a good reference."

Hirst's plan is to attack the BTRDA Gold Star series, but is hoping to start his season with next month's Riponian Stages Rally. "That'll be a good barometer to see where we are," he said. "I see young Elliot Payne's got an entry and he's probably the kid to be watching nowadays I'd say."

BRC CHAMP EDWARDS SEEKS NEW CHALLENGES

British Rally champion Matt Edwards hasn't ruled out a title defence in 2022 after securing his third British title in dramatic fashion on last season's finale on the Ulster Rally, but is looking further afield in his planning for the season ahead.

Having competed in the BRC in every season since its relaunch in 2016, the 37-year-old would equally relish a different programme and has entered the

Galway International Rally in Ireland next month as the first step to sampling new events.

"I'd love the opportunity to go and do something different," Edwards told MN. "I just want to see what I could do on bigger rallies just to say I've done stuff... I want to go and do Rally Finland, I'd love to go and do the Irish Tarmac, I'd love to go and do even three WRC3 events."

"I'd love to go back and try and win Mull. I'd love to go and do British Historics, that's another thing I'd like to do. I'm happy just to keep rallying because I love rallying."

"The number one goal is to be doing something... It does give me purpose. Whatever I do I want to go and be competitive, that's what I like doing."



Edwards: love of rallying foremost

ANGLESEY ROUND OF MN SERIES CANNED BY COVID

The fifth round of the 2021-22 Motorsport News Circuit Rally Championship has been cancelled due to current coronavirus restrictions in Wales.

The Lee Holland Stages at Anglesey was supposed to take place on January 29/30 but event organisers Pendle & District Motor Club as well as Garstang & Preston Motor Club cancelled the event last week.

"We are all understandably disappointed at having to make this decision with just over two weeks until the event but given the uncertainty over the Welsh government's Covid rules and regulations,

we are left with no other option," read an organisers' statement.

"We wish to thank everyone who committed to the event, especially the many people who have given up hundreds of hours already in organising. As a result of this decision, competitors will receive refunds as per the event Regulations."

The MNCRC is currently being led by Neil Roskell as Frank Bird won the fourth round of the season at Brands Hatch last weekend. The championship's reserve event, the SMC Stages, is also at Anglesey but currently doesn't have a confirmed date.



Welsh government restrictions prevent Anglesey outing for MN series



Christmas shopping netted Rally2 for Black

BLACK UPGRADES TO RALLY2 FIESTA

Callum Black has upgraded to a brand-new Ford Fiesta Rally2 ahead of the 2022 season, although he has yet to decide his programme.

Black finished third in BTRDA Gold Star and second in the Welsh Rally Championship last season, having returned to R5 machinery for the first time since 2017. He placed the deposit for the new car before Christmas but isn't sure when it'll arrive from M-Sport.

"They want to get Monte Carlo out the way and then they'll give us a

more up-to-date timescale because obviously all their efforts at the minute are going to the Puma," Black told MN. "So, I don't know when it'll arrive. I'm hoping come the end of the month they'll be able to give a more accurate time, and that'll dictate what we do for the season."

Although Black's season-long entries are still up in the air, he confirmed that his early outings in the new car will come on Tarmac in order to preserve the Fiesta's factory fresh finish.

"I've already got accommodation booked for Clacton and the Jim Clark just in case M-Sport ring up at the end of January and say 'we can get a car to you for then'," Black said. "[If they do] then fantastic: we'll have a go at it, but it's a little bit more likely we'll be looking at May/June time. I would love to go and do Ypres and obviously there's [Northern] Ireland and a question mark of if there's a round in August with the WRC – that would be a brilliant rally to do."

RALLY NEWS



Kristoffersson for WRX

WRX CHAMPION KRISTOFFERSSON RETURNS TO VW

Johan Kristoffersson has announced that he will return to defend his 2021 World Rallycross crown in 2022 at the wheel of a Volkswagen prepared by his eponymous team, as the series enters its first season as an all-electric category.

The record-breaking four-time World RX titlist is no stranger to electric competition, having also claimed the inaugural Extreme E electric buggy series crown driving for RXR.

"It's really inspiring to be part of rallycross's new electric era right from the outset" Kristoffersson said. "The last time we undertook a project on a scale of this kind was in 2014, when we built our own cars for the first season of the World championship. The big difference is that back then, I was completely inexperienced in rallycross – whereas things are a little different now."

As with all entries in World RX next year, Kristoffersson's cars will be powered by powered by 500kW twin motors, able to produce the equivalent of 680bhp, with the RX1e kit developed by Kreisel Electric. The new programme marks a reunion between the Swede and Volkswagen, with which he competed in the WRC and claimed three World RX titles, after competing in an Audi during the 2021 season.

NEW PRESIDENT FOR MOTORSPORT IRELAND

Harper steps up pledging greater collaboration

By Martin Walsh

Motorsport Ireland ushered in a new president at a virtual meeting of its council earlier this month.

Former vice-president Aiden Harper will succeed John Naylor, who completed his second term in the president's office.

A familiar figure in rallying, Harper headed the Safety Commission within MI and in recent times sat on the FIA Closed

Road Commission officiating on many events home and abroad.

Last year, almost a third of the MI-affiliated clubs stated they had no confidence in the governance of the sport.

Harper's appointment is understood to be viewed as a positive by many in the Irish motorsport community, who have laboured under stringent Covid measures since 2020.

The newly elected president told Motorsport News: "I am looking

forward to the task. There is huge potential in Irish motorsport from every angle.

"On the WRC scene we have Craig [Breen] and Paul [Nagle] representing us and there are many young people coming up through the ranks in other disciplines. There is also potential for people to develop within our sport and move into senior positions, it's not all about the competitor, we [MI] need to collaborate much more with our clubs and competitors."



Aiden Harper takes the tiller as Motorsport Ireland leader



East Riding Stages created much competitor interest

YORKSHIRE CLOSED-ROAD RALLY PROVES POPULAR

The very first closed-road rally in Yorkshire, the East Riding Stages, was oversubscribed within hours as entries opened earlier this month.

Entries have been limited to just 100 cars but top talent including David Bogie, Robert Swann, Stephen Simpson, John Stone, Mark Kelly and Hugh Hunter have been enticed to compete.

"I think we had 169 [entries] in total but the quality of entry is superb as well, [we're] well pleased with that," event director

Richard Vincent told MN.

"We started planning this back in April 2019 and you hope as time goes on that people are going to be as excited about it as we are but until you actually press the button and the entry goes live it's all a bit strange. But we're very, very pleased with the entry and the quality of it is great, thanks to everybody who has entered."

Vincent, who has competed in Belgium for the last decade, believes closed-road rallying is the future of the sport in the UK

and is excited to bring the Belgian spirit to England's east coast on February 27.

"I've been loving what they're doing there and that's one of the reasons why I pushed the motor club into doing it, and I was volunteered for the job," said Vincent. "I've been dreaming of this for the past 40-odd years, reading the two- or three-page articles on the Ypres 24 40 years ago got me hooked on and it's just nice to be able to see that dream come into fruition."

SWINSCOE GAINS WHEELS TO MOVE UP

Junior 1000 rallying graduate Archie Swinscoe has bought a Vauxhall Adam R2 for his first season of senior rallying.

Swinscoe, who won both the English and Scottish Junior 1000 championships in 2021 as well as all seven rallies he

started, has spent three years in the junior ranks with a Skoda Citigo. He will however stick with asphalt as he graduates to senior rallies, competing in an Adam R2 acquired from James Williams.

"Christmas definitely came

early for me this year and I'm super excited to start rallying in this Adam R2," Swinscoe wrote on social media. "Thank you to everyone involved, especially my mum and dad, for helping me to get this far but we are only just getting started!"



Swinscoe will campaign this ex-Williams Adam on asphalt



Alternative energy on the Dakar will include hydrogen in 2024 with GCK e-Blast H2

GCK BRINGS HYDROGEN TO DAKAR

Fresh from Audi's stage-winning success on the 2022 Dakar on the first appearance of its RS Q e-tron hybrids on the event, GCK Motorsport has announced that it plans to increase the focus on alternative fuels in the Saudi desert with its hydrogen-powered e-Blast H2.

Founded by former rally and rallycross competitor Guerlain Chicherit in 2017, GCK currently competes on the Dakar using its bio-ethanol-fuelled Thunder

DKR, in which Chicherit crashed out early in the running of the 2022 event but was able to return the car for rebuild, only to go out when the fire extinguishers went off unexpectedly.

Developed in collaboration with German company FEV, Chicherit's new challenger will feature a fuel cell containing 20kg of hydrogen at a pressure of 700 bar, capable of delivering 200kW. In addition, the hydrogen cell is directly connected to a

state-of-the-art lithium-ion battery that generates 50kWh.

GCK said its two-gear electric motor has been built to reach 320kW of energy, the equivalent of 430 horsepower, by the time that it is ready for its debut on the 2024 running of the Dakar.

"The innovations behind the e-Blast H2 are a driving force to help scale up the efforts of green technology across motorsport and industrial sectors alike," Chicherit said.



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HISTORICS

DOWN THE PUB BEN ABBOTS

VSCC trials newbie
Age: 30 Lives: Bristol



Abbotts: Loves his specials

He's building a trials special

"I'm building a PVT Austin 7 special. I wanted a Pre-War car and knew I could build something. So, I bought a 1933 Austin 7 box saloon for £2500. That's what the worst Austin 7 in Britain cost. I'm a huge believer that there is no such thing as too far gone. I repaired as much of the rolling chassis as possible."

A competition debut awaits

"I joined the VSCC as I came from Chipping Norton, where the club is based. I found out about trials and the idea of competing in it is pretty exciting. Speed events are just too expensive for me, so I've focused on trials. I'll have to drive it to events to avoid the expense of a trailer."

He's doing most of the work

"After many months of working on individual parts in the warm and dry of the workshop I spent the first week of the new year turning the bare chassis into a roller. The engine is with Ian Tillman of Oxfordshire Sevens for a full rebuild, I should have it back soon! Once the engine's in obviously the next step is to build the body, which is something I have absolutely no clue about. I'm hoping for something vaguely like an Austin 7 Ulster."

There is a target date

"I'm impatient to get out in it and do some competition, so I've set myself a bit of a deadline with the Herefordshire Trial on March 19. The delivery of the engine is key to hitting that date."

He's still new to driving

"The budget is very small, and I've never been for a ride in a Pre-War car, much less driven one. But I've also never driven a car with a yellow number plate, having taught myself to drive in a 1955 Morris Minor traveller a couple of years ago. I've only had a driving licence for 18 months."

He loves old cars

"I've got a bicycle repair and service shop in Bristol. I lived without a car for a long time, and I only have cars because I like them, and they are fun. I've never been interested in modern cars but my whole life I've wanted an old car. But Pre-War cars are very expensive, and I couldn't afford one as daily transport."



Wurr will field a V8-powered Crossle

V8 CROSSLESWAP FOR HISTORIC BATTLER WURR FOR NEW SEASON

Morgan man will use Buick-engined monster in 2022 sports-racing events

By Paul Lawrence

Former Morgan racer Matthew Wurr will race the unique Buick V8-engined Crossle 5S sports-racing car this season.

Wurr, who has most recently raced the ex-Peter Gethin Formula 5000 McLaren M10B of Mark Longmore, is the proud new owner of the 1964 sports-racer used to good effect at Goodwood in 2019 by Cameron Jackson.

For Wurr, it will be a change of tack from the Chevrolet V8-engined 1970 single-seater. He said: "After a rebuild of the Buick V8 engine and a sympathetic renovation I hope to race in selected Guards Trophy rounds. I also hope for a repeat invitation to the Goodwood Members Meeting in the Gurney Cup and the Whitsun Trophy at the Goodwood Revival."

The Crossle, chassis number C5-S64-13, was ordered new in

1964 by Irish racer Brian Nelson and was initially fitted with a Daimler SP250 V8 engine. Nelson raced it in 1964 and '65 at Phoenix Park, Bishops Court and Kirkistown in Ireland.

It then went to Michael Martin and later to John Le Sage, who fitted a 2.5-litre Repco engine. By 1968, the Crossle was sold to America and spent nearly a decade being raced by Jim Miller who fitted

it with a V8 Buick engine.

Into the mid-2000s, the car was back in the UK and was returned to the Crossle factory near Belfast for restoration and its history was reconfirmed.

In 2019, Jackson showed the car's full potential with a resounding victory in the Gurney Cup at the Goodwood Members' Meeting and a Whitsun Trophy podium during the Revival Meeting.



Historic Formula 2 will feature two rounds on British circuits

Bumper UK line-up for Formula 2

Historic Formula 2 will feature at two UK race meetings in July with double-headers at Brands Hatch on July 9-10 and the Oulton Park Gold Cup on July 29-31.

After two years of Covid constrained calendars, the Historic Sports Car Club has unveiled a return to a pan-European calendar for the 2022 Historic Formula 2 International Series. In both 2020 and 2021, HF2 raced mainly in the UK due

to travel restrictions. Andy Dee-Crowne of the HSCC said: "For obvious reasons, we have not been able to run our usual European calendar for the last two seasons, but we are very hopeful that the calendar will be able to go ahead as planned."

The calendar is: May 6-8 Hockenheim; June 17-19 Paul Ricard; July 9-10 Brands Hatch GP; July 29-31 Oulton Park; August 12-14 Nurburgring; October 7-9 Dijon.

Jaguar racers get special slot at Le Mans Classic

Contenders in the Jaguar Classic Challenge will get to race at Le Mans this summer in a dedicated support race to the Le Mans Classic over the weekend of June 30-July 3.

The race on Saturday morning, before the start of the Le Mans Classic races, is a partnership between Motor Racing Legends and Peter Auto.

The race will be open to all Jaguars that could have been eligible for the Le Mans 24 Hours before 1966.

The Jaguar Classic Challenge will also run at Donington's Historic Festival (April 30-May 1), Thruxton (June 11-12) and at Silverstone Grand Prix (October 22-23).



Jags will head to Le Mans in July

Monte Carlo Challenge put on ice until 2023

Although travel restrictions to France have now eased, HERO-ERA has had to postpone the 2022 Winter Challenge to Monte Carlo until February 2023.

Planned to run from February 6-10, the Winter Challenge is an alternative for the Monte Carlo Historique but has been shelved as recent travel restrictions made it impossible for the UK-based organisers to complete pre-event route checks and planning.

Guy Woodcock, competition director at HERO-ERA, said: "For everyone's safety and to act in a responsible way with enough notice for all parties, we have had to put the event back to 2023. However, we expect to run the rally at a similar time and date in 2023 over the same route."



CROSBY'S SUCCESS IN SOMERSET

Paul Crosby and navigator Andy Pullan emerged as winners of the first classic rally of 2022 when they won HERO's Per Ardua Ad Infinitum event in Somerset and Devon. They successfully defended their 2020 PAAI crown in Crosby's Porsche 911 with a margin of 3m23s over the VW Golf GTI of Paul Bloxidge and Ian Canavan. Crosby, who also won the Test Pilot Award for the fastest driver over the tests, said: "This was a tough but brilliant event."

IN BRIEF

Harry Tinkler

Motorsport News is sad to report the death of Harry Tinkler, one of the sport's longest serving and most respected race officials. Tinkler, from the north-east was a volunteer at northern circuits for nearly 70 years and died early in January at the age of 84. MN sends condolences to his family and many friends across the sport.

Mike Pendleton

Mike Pendleton, a notable national racer from the early 1960s, died in the first week of the new year aged 90 after a serious illness. Pendleton raced sports cars and touring cars through until 1963, notably a Costin-Lister, the ex-Stirling Moss Lotus 19 and a Jaguar Mk2, which he raced in the 1963 British Saloon Car Championship.

Castles Trial is back

The annual Three Castles Trial will return to a June date this year after moving to early September last year due to Covid. The popular three-day event for pre '86 cars will again be based in Llandudno and take in special tests and regularity sections in North Wales. The Great Orme and the roads of the Llyn Peninsula will be key features of the June 7-10 event.

Pomeroy is go

After being lost to Covid lockdown last year, the VSCC's Pomeroy Trophy will return at Silverstone on Saturday February 19. The quirky event, which sets out to find the best grand touring car by a series of tests, includes high-speed trials on the Grand Prix circuit for an eclectic mix of vehicles from both sides of the Second World War. It will be the 66th running of the event in 70 years.

Tour de Corse

The organisers of the 22nd Historic Tour de Corse are expecting another over-subscribed entry for the event when the 2022 edition runs from October 2-8. The five-day, 18-stage asphalt rally on the French island of Corsica covers around 220 stage miles on roads previously used in the World Rally Championship. Last year's rally drew 450 entries for the 350 available places.

O'Kane's adventure

American enthusiast Paul O'Kane travelled from his home in California to contest the recent HERO-ERA PAAI Rally in Devon and Somerset. Along with navigator Henry Carr, O'Kane finished eighth overall in his Mercedes 280SLC. O'Kane rallied with John Buffum in the 1980s and is now keen to do more classic events in Europe. "It was so challenging, especially as there was flooding everywhere," he said.

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Landmark result for Merc's star as he denies Norris a maiden win

LEWIS HAILS A MAGICAL MOMENT AS HE HITS A CENTURY



Hamilton left it late to pounce for his 100th win



By Matt James

Lewis Hamilton has hailed his rivals after landing his 100th grand prix win in Russia on Sunday, snatching the victory from fellow Brit Lando Norris. McLaren man Norris seemed set to take his maiden victory until a late rain shower left him slithering off the circuit. Hamilton had been called in by his Mercedes team and swapped tyres. He was able to hunt down Norris and take the race win in the dying moments.

Hamilton, who finished one place ahead of his title rival Max Verstappen, says the 100-win benchmark is something he finds hard to believe. The seven-time champion said: "It's a magical moment. I could only ever have dreamed of still being here and having this opportunity to win these races and get to drive against such phenomenal talent this late in my career and to continue to building with Mercedes. I'm so proud of everything we've done, not only on track but also off."

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Special feature:
Lewis's best
wins p20

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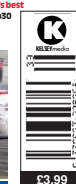
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COLUMNIST

DAVID ADDISON



A trip to Abu Dhabi was anything but simple for the TV commentator

Photos: Foto Speedy

Nothing says international travel these days like a Covid test and so here I am ready for another over-sized cotton bud to be rammed up my hooter. I'm off to Abu Dhabi for the Gulf 12 Hours and my irritation about testing is nothing compared to the grief that organisers, teams and drivers have already endured and are still doing so on-site, as I discover.

The Gulf 12 Hours is an event that has had its ups and down but promoter Andrea Ficarelli and his team have remained loyal to the concept of giving track time to drivers in a wow location. Like all good organisers, Ficarelli and his team have listened to what their drivers and teams want and so gone are the prototypes that were initially part of the event, their braking distances being one problem but another was that, if they held together, they were always going to deny the GT3 teams a chance.

Ficarelli has stuck with the idea of giving teams and drivers track time in the region since 2012, even having to relocate to Bahrain for 2021 when Formula 1 snaffled the original date in Abu Dhabi. As it turned out, the 2021 and 2022 events have kick-started the season but a date for this December has already been announced to try to put things back on track. It's a nice, relaxed event and while it is a 12-hour race, it is made up of two six-hour parts, with repair time in the middle. The aim is to keep cars running, to let people maximise the track time available and to that end, everyone is classified as a finisher, however many laps you do.

Detractors of the event will point to 15 cars and sneer. Truth be told, it was a mammoth task to get an event run at all with all the Covid-related dramas that prevail. For one, you need to get three or four drivers to a car depending upon which class you enter. That's all fine, but they need budget and if one then drops out, the entire entry becomes shaky. And drivers were dropping out, in part thanks to a positive



The entry took part in two six-hour races

Covid test. More of that in a moment...

Then there was a problem when the boat that was set to freight the grid to Abu Dhabi was delayed en route which led to some drama over the Christmas break. Would it arrive in time for teams to receive their cars and prepare? Thankfully, boat and cars arrived at their destination on time. One panic over...

Now, when you arrive in Abu Dhabi, you have to take another PCR test, which then links to the country's green pass which allows access to places. But you also need a PCR test within a given number of days to keep the pass green, so there was a stream of people trooping off to the test centre at the circuit.

Next panic. We lost the TV director, as he turned positive and became holed up in his hotel room. Then, drivers who were fine on Thursday were positive by Friday and couldn't race. What to do? Where do you find a driver with budget in Abu Dhabi just hours before qualifying? Thankfully, the affected teams did get around the problem, so for example AF Corse, which was affected, was able to get hold of Eddie Cheever who was at the other end of the pitlane as a Ferrari Challenge driver coach. Got a helmet? Good. Overalls? Excellent. Sign here. Driven here before? No, well,

qualifying is in an hour. Off you go.

Covid had also cost the race one of its biggest draws as Valentino Rossi had been in contact with a positive-tester and hence couldn't travel to the event. Yes, it was a loss but it did offer another story which was the inclusion of super-sub David Fumanelli. The Italian, a Rossi fan, delivered a mega stint in the second part of the race to haul the car into the mix.

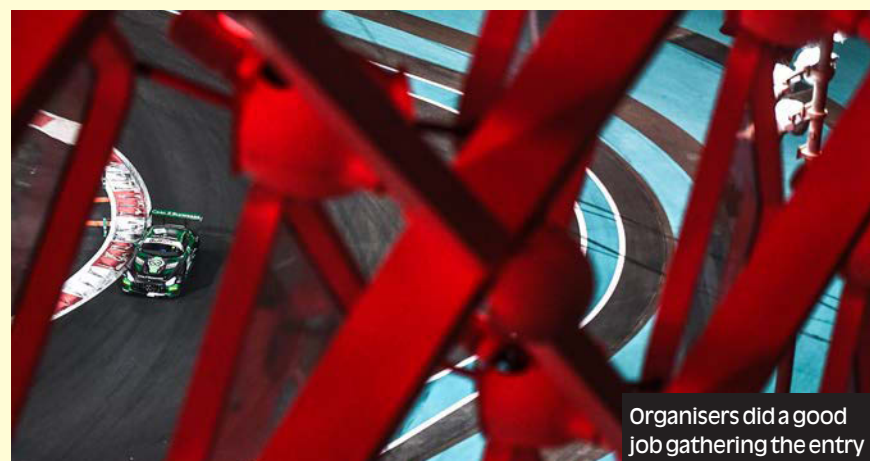
Another star was British young gun Casper Stevenson who set the fastest lap of the race, kicking the efforts of Dries Vanthoor into touch for example, which is no mean feat. A GT career beckons for Stevenson and there were many teams sniffing after him by the Saturday evening.

It's wrong to compare the Gulf 12 Hours with other championship events because it is a one-off, but it's one that any GT team or driver should look at. Whether you want track time as a regular driver, a rookie in need of experience, a team wanting mileage or a manufacturer wanting to launch and test a new GT3 car, the event offers something to all.

And there is a Belgian bar opposite the circuit. Nearly did 12 hours in there too. Nearly...



David Fumanelli stood in for Valentino Rossi



Organisers did a good job gathering the entry

"The next panic was that we lost the television director..."

FEATURE



The class of 2022 with FIA headmaster Ben Sulayem

WHY THE WRC HAS HAD A MAJOR BOOST FOR THE 2022 COMPETITION

Graham Lister runs through the biggest changes for this year's showdown

OTHER NEW RULES IN SHORT

World Rally Cars: The 2017-specification World Rally Cars get a stay of execution but only drivers who have not scored points for a manufacturer team within the last five seasons will be allowed to get behind the wheel. This is part of the plan to keep top-level drivers out of the previous-era cars, which might be faster than the Rally1 cars initially.

Crash helmet straps: Drivers can stop during a special stage to correctly fasten their crash helmet strap without being

penalised. It follows some very visible instances of drivers passing through stages with their crash helmet straps unfastened. From this season, once the omission has been identified and providing the driver stops in a safe location as quickly as possible, they won't receive a penalty. It will be a one-minute time penalty rather than a cash fine for anyone caught breaking the rules.

Engine and hybrid limits: Manufacturers will be limited to two engines per Rally1 car

during in 2022. The reduction from the initial three engines to two is in line with ongoing cost-cutting measures and will achieve a 33% saving in terms of engine expenditure. In addition, the number of hybrid units used is also being controlled. For 2022, a manufacturer team of up to three cars can use nine units across the season. On each event, no more than two hybrid units per car can be used. There will be a five-minute time penalty if the permitted number is exceeded.

Monaco's famous Casino Square, which hosts the start of the 90th Monte Carlo Rally this evening (Thursday), has undergone a major refit in recent months with locals remarking on the extra space available in which to stroll, despite several new palm trees springing up, as is the way.

There have also been changes aplenty in the World Rally Championship, albeit of the hybrid variety rather than anything to do with the Arecaceae family of perennial flowering plants.

But the most important change from World Rally Cars – which headlined the sport's top tier from 1997 – to Rally1 is not the hybrid system, it is the fact that any last shred of DNA shared with showroom product has now gone.

While there was never much correlation between a 1.1-litre Peugeot 206 supermini and the World Rally Car in which Marcus Gronholm won two WRC titles, even those last vestigial links in the bodyshell have been consigned to history from the start of 2022 onwards.

Only once before has the WRC witnessed thoroughbred competition spaceframes being clad in composite bodies, and that was the Group B era. Unlike those monsters of 40 years ago, however, Rally1 cars are built from largely common components.

All share the core of an FIA-supplied crash structure, while the spaceframes themselves must adhere identical dimensions to ensure parity.

So how is a bulbous Ford Puma identically proportioned to a dinky Toyota Yaris? Scaling is the answer. Try fitting some Rally1 body panels to the equivalent

production model, and it's highly likely that even the radiator grille will be a different size.

Aerodynamically, the Rally1 cars have been shorn of their predecessors' front-end dive planes, fender vents and rear diffusers, while the rear wings are considerably simpler. The active centre differential has gone and so too have the paddle-operated gearboxes, heralding a return for five-speed sequential units. Bespoke and costly suspension set-ups have also ceded to cheaper hardware in common with R5/Rally2 machinery.

The 1600cc turbocharged four-cylinder Global Race Engine is carried over across all Rally1 cars, having had its development frozen on July 1 last year. Now, however, they are mated to the all-important hybrid component.

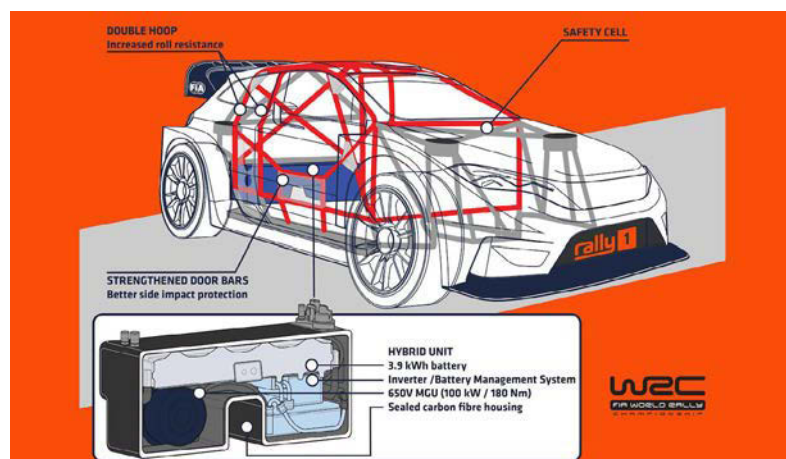
This is another standard system, developed by German supplier Compact Dynamics and using an Austrian 3.9kWh 750V battery from Kreisel Electric, an inverter/battery management system, together with the already known Motor Generation Unit (MGU) which can spin up to 12,000rpm and add 134bhp (or 100kW) to the car. The inverter drives the electric motor, as well as capturing energy obtained from braking and the petrol engine to charge the battery.

All of this equipment must be mounted at the rear of the car. In launch mode at the start of each stage, both the engine and the hybrid are fully engaged. After that it is down to the team's software to decide when and how the electric boost is delivered – there is no 'push-to-pass' type of direct input that the driver can use to summon the extra grunt.

The cars must also run on only the electric motor for a designated percentage of road miles at each event – such as 2.27 miles of the 939.22-mile route of the Monte Carlo Rally. Yes, you read that right – although the all-electric mileage will likely increase as the technology beds in during the season.

In effect, Rally1 follows the example set by circuit racing series such as NASCAR, Australian Supercars and Japanese Super GT in offering a single technical platform. Its aim is to retain existing manufacturers and lure more in... and that will depend upon how popular this new-look WRC becomes.

Before vacating his post as the FIA's rally boss, Yvan Matton said: "We can only be confident and from what we have seen from video footage the Rally1 cars are really exciting, which means we have kept the DNA from the previous World Rally Car. But we must remember just how important the Rally1 regulations are for the future of our sport. They have provided the manufacturers with the proper tool they need on the sporting side but also on the marketing side. We are all excited for Rallye Monte Carlo to see the cars in action after this very long and detailed process carried out in partnership with the manufacturers to achieve the same major step we made with the World Rally Car 25 years ago." ■



"Any last shred of showroom DNA is gone"



Composite-clad spaceframes were last a thing in the mid-1980s, when Group B roared. Rally1 approach is based on cost

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com, FIA, Red Bull Content Pool

ALSO NEW IN 2022

Co-drivers: Benjamin Veillas comes in for the retiring Julien Ingrassia alongside reigning World champion Sebastien Ogier. But don't count on Veillas becoming a regular fixture as Ogier is only planning a partial programme. Sebastien Loeb will be another bit-part player in 2022 and has recruited Isabelle Garmiche to replace long-term partner Daniel Elena, who has also retired.

Events: Japan, New Zealand and Sweden are back and there's still hope for Rally Northern Ireland filling the blank calendar space in August.

Fuel: German firm P1 Racing Fuels is supplying fossil-free fuel for all Rally1 cars.

Line-ups: M-Sport welcomes Craig Breen and Paul Nagle, while Jonas Andersson returns to co-drive Gus Greensmith. Oliver Solberg starts his first

campaign as a fully-fledged factory driver for Hyundai, but will share the team's third i20 N Rally1 with Dani Sordo. Elliott Edmondson is Solberg's new permanent co-driver. Aaron Johnston, who partnered Solberg up until their split midway through 2021, replaces Daniel Barritt alongside Takamoto Katsuta.

Personnel: Julien Moncet will have a major influence at Hyundai as deputy team director following Andrea Adamo's exit. There's still a vacancy at the FIA where a new rally director is being sought after Yves Matton left the role shortly before Christmas. Newly elected president and ex-rally driver of note Mohammed Ben Sulayem will be part of the recruitment process. Chris Williams is M-Sport's new technical director but has been a long-standing servant of the Cumbrian firm.

Safety first in the WRC's new era

By introducing hybrid technology in the WRC, the FIA has implemented a number of measures to keep everyone safe.

They include specifying that the hybrid components are contained in a reinforced safety structure, while an awareness campaign for fans has also been launched on social media.

This highlights the precautions spectators and safety crews must take in the event of an accident, with 750V potentially coursing through the car.

Rally1 cars are identifiable by an 'HY' graphic on the side door panels, like those seen on the Le Mans hypercars, and safety lights on the windscreen and both side pillars will turn green if the car is safe to touch. An added flashing red light and loud warning siren mean a car is best left until help arrives.

All Rally1 cars must carry two pairs of Class-0 gloves capable of withstanding 1000V that can be easily accessible for the driver and co-driver when vacating their car. This will allow both

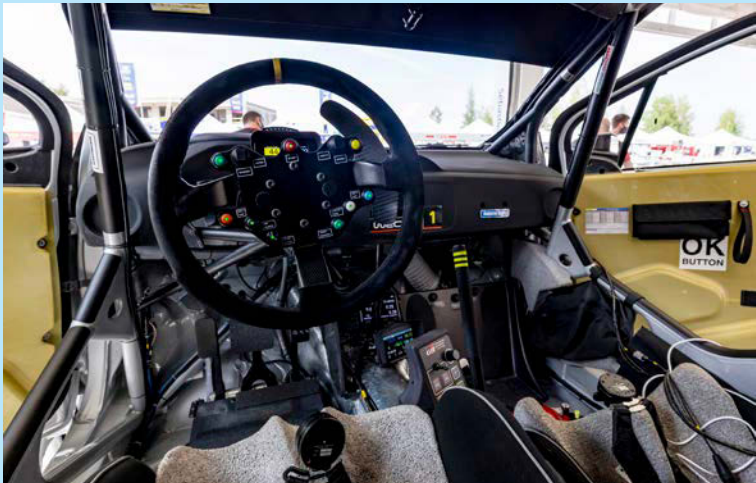
crew members to provide valuable assistance in the event of a high voltage issue affecting either their car or the car of a competitor. Crews and marshals have received training.

Safety on WRC events will be further enhanced with the introduction of Artificial Intelligence technology gazing out of Rally1 cars.

These forward-facing, in-car devices will constantly scan the stage and the direct surroundings, identifying all shapes and therefore analysing the positioning of

spectators. These images will be used to highlight anybody standing in a potentially dangerous location and expand on the work being undertaken by the FIA safety delegate.

The introduction of the AI cameras will also assist organisers in developing their safety plans, roadbooks and other documentation. Rally Sweden and Rally Estonia have previously trialled the use of AI camera equipment with the results proving to be extremely useful.



World Rally Car cockpit (pictured) becomes more intelligent in 2022

The classes explained

Those who didn't get it used to criticise the European Rally Championship for having too many classes. But bosses were only ever responding to demand and providing an opportunity for more drivers to do well more often. And the policy clearly worked with sky-high registrations year after year and lots of satisfied customers.

For 2022, the FIA and WRC Promoter have followed the ERC's something-for-everyone approach by restructuring WRC2 with seven separate categories (three for drivers, three for co-drivers and one for teams). There's an overall title for drivers and co-drivers, a title for Junior drivers and co-drivers and a title for Masters' drivers and co-drivers, with the Junior and Masters awards based on age and therefore in line with their overall experience.

It might sound confusing, but it's a sound move as far

fewer drivers will now head home empty handed.

Britain's Chris Ingram is in contention for the overall and Junior titles and the fight among the Junior drivers will be an additional talking point at every event, especially as rising talents Marco Bulacia, Erik Cais, Nikolay Gryazin and Gregoire Munster are among his rivals. With the exception of Bulacia, all the contenders are ERC graduates.

Previously, WRC3 was also for Rally2 cars and intended as a battleground for privateers. But in order to reflect the FIA's rally sporting pyramid, WRC3 is now for Rally3 cars. Currently interest is a little thin on the ground, but in Junior WRC champion Sami Pajari and Jan Cerny, who was part of the WRC Academy intake in 2011, the prospects are for decent competition. And that will only increase when more manufacturers unleash cars to rival M-Sport's Ford Fiesta

Rally3, currently the only Rally3 car on the market. With Renault working on a Rally3 project, good times are ahead of the FIA's affordable four-wheel-drive category.

The Junior WRC has joined the Rally3 revolution with Fiesta Rally3 replacing the Fiesta Rally4 as the championship's base car. The JWRC arrive-and-drive category is due to get underway on Rally Sweden next month with events in Croatia, Portugal, Estonia and Greece also planned.

Andreas Mikkelsen is back to defend his WRC2 with Turkish-owned, Germany-based Toksport and has recruited Mads Ostberg's former co-driver Torstein Eriksen – last season's champion co-driver. Eric Camilli and Yohan Rossel, the 2021 WRC3 champion, will rival the Norwegian, while Gryazin and Ostberg will also be leading contenders.

Ingram's chances are more

than favourable with the Brit part of the Toksport line-up, the team that guided he and co-driver Ross Whittock to the 2019 ERC title.

Whoever comes out on top in the WRC2 title battle will potentially score fewer points than in 2021. That's because how bonus points are being handed out is changing. Instead of the quickest five WRC2 contenders scoring points on the Powerstage, only top three will be rewarded this season on a descending scale of 3-2-1.

That's because drivers selected for live TV coverage on the Powerstage can be compromised if they're running higher in the starting order compared to their rivals on some events. It was therefore agreed that the current scoring scale creates too much disparity if the drivers fighting for the WRC2 lead are not competing in the same conditions.



Junior champion Pajari will graduate to WRC3 and will be a force



Ingram is looking to lay the foundations of a 2023 WRC2 title push

FEATURE

THE MAIN PLAYERS ON THE BIGGEST STAGE

Three factory teams, plus one semi-works effort, will assemble for World Rally Championship's hybrid era. This is how they will line up.

TOYOTA GAZOO RACING WORLD RALLY TEAM

Beast: Toyota GR Yaris Rally1
Base: Jyväskylä, Finland
Bosses: Tom Fowler (technical director), Jari-Matti Latvala (team principal)
MN's verdict: While Hyundai faltered for much of 2021, Toyota very much prospered and secured the drivers' and makes' titles with comparative ease. Although the Yaris wasn't necessarily the fastest car, it was reliable and having the same trio of drivers (Evans, Ogier and Roanperra) for the full season created stability, plus the best driver for each occasion. Jari-Matti Latvala might have been more a spokesperson than an out-and-out team principal, but he was always calm and considered and helped to create a great team atmosphere. His influence will only get stronger and that's no bad thing. No Sebastien Ogier for the full season is a dent to any team's ambitions but Toyota isn't short on driving talent, and there are ample resources if performances wane.



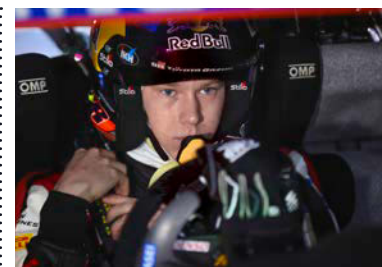
#1 Sebastien Ogier (FRA)
 Age: 38 Co-driver: Benjamin Veillas (FRA) WRC starts: 168 WRC wins: 54 WRC points: 2537 2021 position: 1st
Strengths: Brilliant on all surfaces, the best in the business
Weaknesses: Partial campaign will rule out a record-equalling ninth World title bid, but Ogier isn't too fussed about that. Co-driver Veillas is an unknown quantity in competition as he takes over from the Frenchman's long-term partner Julien Ingrassia.



#4 Esapekka Lappi (FIN)
 Age: 31 Co-driver: Janne Ferm (FIN) WRC starts: 65 WRC wins: 1 WRC points: 366 2021 position: 12th (7th, WRC2)
Strengths: No-nonsense Finn can be as fast as he is calm
Weaknesses: Car sharing arrangement for the 2022 season means that his seat time won't be in plentiful supply, which is hardly ideal at the start of the Rally1 era. Lappi has plenty yet to prove.



#33 Elfyn Evans (GBR)
 Age: 33 Co-driver: Scott Martin (GBR) WRC starts: 105 WRC wins: 5 WRC points: 827 2021 position: 2nd
Strengths: Welshman's ability to bounce back from adversity is well documented (Portugal success made up for late Croatia heartache, while Finland triumph was spectacular and followed on from a difficult mid-season period). Martin's calming influence always a plus in any partnership and continuity of a third Toyota term also helpful
Weaknesses: Essentially becoming Toyota's team leader following Ogier's decision to go part time will bring added pressure. Needs to display killer instinct more often to support sublime talent.



#69 Kalle Roanperra (FIN)
 Age: 21 Co-driver: Jonne Halttunen (FIN) WRC starts: 39 WRC wins: 2 WRC points: 244 2021 position: 4th
Strengths: Outstanding natural talent means he can do things he shouldn't be capable of at such a young age
Weaknesses: Experience, particularly on Tarmac. He went through several highs and lows in the 2021 season and this will be the perfect time to show that he has taken another step forward with more mileage.

TOYOTA GAZOO RACING WORLD RALLY TEAM NG

Beast: Toyota GR Yaris Rally1
Base: Jyväskylä, Finland
Bosses: Tom Fowler (technical director), Jari-Matti Latvala (team principal)
MN's verdict: A second-string Toyota team is new for 2022 and provides an opportunity for sole driver Katsuta to grow as part of the firm's driver development programme, while also taking points away from rivals – when the Japanese talent is on his game.

#18 Takamoto Katsuta (JPN)
 Age: 28 Co-driver: Aaron Johnston (IRL) WRC starts: 39 WRC wins: 0 WRC points: 92 2021 position: 7th
Strengths: High-speed gravel rallies
Weaknesses: Lack of consistency and loss of vastly experienced long-term wingman Dan Barritt (although his new partner Johnston is proven and getting better and better). This will be a year for Katsuta to deliver on the flashes of promise.



Toyota protege Takamoto Katsuta will have the paymasters watching closely

Photos: Red Bull Content Pool, mcklein-imagedatabase.com



HYUNDAI SHELL MOBIS WORLD RALLY TEAM

Beast: Hyundai i20 N Rally1
Base: Alzenau, Germany
Bosses: Christian Loriaux (technical director), Julien Moncet (deputy team director)
MN's verdict: No one person is bigger than any team and no team is the property of one person. The hive mentality of Hyundai and its focus on the manufacturers' title above all makes sense, but with arguably the top two drivers in the series both ravenous for a drivers' crown, strong management is going to be essential. If the technical fragility that hit hard in 2021 is no more, then there's every chance that Hyundai could easily celebrate a first drivers' championship this season. The problem is that its contenders may become more interested in beating each other than in delivering the manufacturer points needed by their Korean mothership. While to fans there's no better barometer of success than to have a driver among the elite ranks who have earned the number one on their car, different priorities exist in Seoul. While Breen and, to a lesser extent, Evans both have the pace and seniority needed to lead their respective squads, at Hyundai the prospect of a lip-smacking battle looms large.



#2 Oliver Solberg (SWE)
Age: 20 Co-driver: Elliott Edmondson (GBR) WRC starts: 17 WRC wins: 0 WRC points: 30 2021 position: 12th (18th, WRC2) **Strengths:** Pace and potential **Weaknesses:** Lacks experience of top-flight competition and didn't exactly achieve the best set of results in 2021, although changing co-drivers as often as his socks probably didn't help.



#6 Dani Sordo (ESP)
Age: 38 Co-driver: Candido Carrera (ESP) WRC starts: 177 WRC wins: 3 WRC points: 1247 2021 position: 6th **Strengths:** Nobody has ever delivered more valuable manufacturer points **Weaknesses:** Time in the car and the absolute speed to win from the front mean that he is unlikely to rip up any trees in the 2022 competition.



#8 Ott Tänak (EST)
Age: 34 Co-driver: Martin Jarveoja (EST) WRC starts: 123 WRC wins: 14 WRC points: 1103 2021 position: 5th **Strengths:** Has the ability to be unbeatable on gravel. He's also an honest straight-talker **Weaknesses:** Neuville. Since arriving in Alzenau as World champion at the start of 2020, the Estonian has yet to unseat his teammate as the lead contender. If the car is strong, any intra-team battles may step up a notch in 2022.



#11 Thierry Neuville (BEL)
Age: 33 Co-driver: Martijn Wydaeghe (BEL) WRC starts: 129 WRC wins: 15 WRC points: 1483 2021 position: 3rd **Strengths:** Asphalt pace, Powerstage dominance and confidence in co-driver Wydaeghe are big pluses **Weaknesses:** In 2021 it was his car, in 2022 it's hard to pick one out with any great certainty but the team must up its strategy game

M-SPORT FORD WRT

Beast: Ford Puma Rally1
Base: Cockermouth, Cumbria
Bosses: Richard Millener (team principal), Chris Williams (technical director)
MN's verdict: Although the British team's commitment and the ability of its staff are on a par with those of its rivals, the question remains whether it has the absolute budget to challenge at the top. But it in Loeb it can count on the sport's most successful driver (for the Monte Carlo Rally and selected other rounds at least), while Breen was fantastic on his occasional outings for Hyundai in 2021 and will be a major force with a full programme under his belt. Greensmith progressed well last term and will only improve further in 2022, with podiums expected by his team. Fourmaux has the potential to be one of the best, albeit in the long rather than short term. M-Sport also has a knack of topping the order when new regulations are introduced and has tested extensively to be ready for the Rally1 era.



#16 Adrien Fourmaux (FRA)
Age: 26 Co-driver: Alexandre Coria (FRA) WRC starts: 26 WRC wins: 0 WRC points: 45 2021 position: 10th **Strengths:** Learns and drives fast **Weaknesses:** Lacks time behind the wheel at the top level, but that will only improve throughout the fresh campaign.



#19 Sebastien Loeb (FRA)
Age: 47 Co-driver: Isabelle Galmiche (FRA) WRC starts: 180 WRC wins: 79 WRC points: 1743 **Strengths:** Phenomenal achievement and experience **Weaknesses:** Limited programme begins on the back of Dakar outing. Co-driver Galmiche is new in competition mode.



#42 Craig Breen (IRL)
Age: 31 Co-driver: Paul Nagle (IRL) WRC starts: 68 WRC wins: 0 WRC points: 288 2021 position: 8th **Strengths:** Still knocking on the door of his first victory but won't ever give up trying and his first full season – with no other programmes to distract him – gives him a great and deserved opportunity **Weaknesses:** Monte testing crash was unhelpful, while the Irishman's event knowledge is lacking in comparison to some of his rivals. But Breen is brilliant at being quick, quickly.



#44 Gus Greensmith (GBR)
Age: 25 Co-driver: Jonas Andersson (SWE) WRC starts: 58 WRC wins: 0 WRC points: 91 2021 position: 9th **Strengths:** Consistent performances and progression help to silence some of his critics. Also benefited from Chris Patterson's experience in 2021 and new co-driver Andersson has plenty of that **Weaknesses:** His team might think podiums are possible but the British youngster needs to show a little bit more to finish in the top three on merit.



FEATURE

AROUND THE RALLY WORLD IN 297 DAYS

MN's guide to the WRC calendar and the challenges in store. By *Graham Lister*

I fall goes to plan and the Covid axe doesn't fall, the 2022 World Rally Championship will be contested over 13 rounds between January 20 and November 13.

In theory that means a one-event increase from 2021 but there's still one round to be firmed up with Rally Northern Ireland in pole position to fill the gap, providing the requisite Stormont sterling is made available.

But if there isn't the money, aside from the fact there will be one vacancy on the calendar, it will mean no UK WRC round for the third season running.

While the championship's potential absence from these shores would be cause for disappointment, there hasn't been a Rally Japan since 2010 with Rally New Zealand's absence dating back to 2012.

However, both events are due to return to the WRC roster this season as is Rally Sweden, which is back on the calendar after missing out in 2021 due to Covid-related restrictions.

Here's MN's guide to the 12 confirmed events.

Monte Carlo Rally

Date: January 20-23

Surface: Asphalt

Base: Monaco

2021 winners: Sebastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (Toyota Yaris WRC)

A Tarmac rally in name but not in nature with ice and snow a constant menace. That makes tyre choice the big challenge to master but for a whole loop of stages, not just one. For the 90th running, organisers have come up with a route that's 95% different to the 2021 version with a return to the iconic Col de Turini at night for the first time since 2013 being one of the highlights. Monaco's harbour also returns as the event hub for the first time since 2006, following stints in the less appealing but more practical Valence and Gap.



Rally Sweden

When: February 24-27

Surface: Ice/snow

Base: Umea

2021 winners: Event not held

The move north from Varmland to Umea is the organiser's latest attempt to guarantee the snow and sub-zero temperatures needed to make the rally work, particularly after the last running in 2020 lacked snow, ice and

significant stage mileage as a result. The university city is 445 miles closer to the Arctic Circle than the rally's previous Torsby home, and with a later-in-February date to avoid a clash with the Winter Olympics (which the Swedes won't want to miss) that's a good thing. Although several stages will be familiar to home-based crews, they will be all-new to the WRC's elite.



Croatia Rally

When: April 21-24

Surface: Asphalt

Base: Zagreb

2021 winners: Sebastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (Toyota Yaris WRC)

Croatia delivered one of the most dramatic moments of 2021 when it made its WRC bow – just a shame for Elfyn Evans that the Powerstage wasn't a few corners shorter as a

mistake with the finish in sight handed his team-mate Sebastien Ogier victory by 0.6s instead. Keen to build on the success of their first WRC counter, organisers are extending the route to take in stages close to the Adriatic coast during a day away from Zagreb. They're also promising a greater focus on spectator safety and control after capacity was exceeded at several viewing spots in 2021.

Rally Portugal

When: May 19-22

Surface: Gravel

Base: Matosinhos

2021 winners: Elfyn Evans/Scott Martin (Toyota Yaris WRC)

Portugal's WRC counter is one of the oldest events, having been a founding round in 1973. It was ever-present until a chaotic 2001 led to the axe but it was back, albeit in the Algarve, for 2007, before a return to its northern home close to its Fafe epicentre was secured for 2015. Rising ambient temperatures, stages change from sandy and soft to rutted and rocky, while demanding corners after crests make this event a difficult one.



Rally Italy

When: June 2-5

Surface: Gravel

Base: Olbia, Sardinia

2021 winners: Sebastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (Toyota Yaris WRC)

Sardinia's stages are narrow, fast, rough and tough and often lined with trees and rocks. A hard base and soft sandy surface combine to make road cleaning a big factor, while hanging dust is a nuisance. Sardinia has been home to Italy's WRC round since 2004 (Rallye Sanremo used to have the honour) and the 19th edition is the second in succession back in Olbia following a spell in Alghero where it moved to in 2014. After running as the



penultimate round in 2020 due to Covid-19, the rally returned to its more familiar – and hotter – June date in 2021.

Safari Rally

When: June 23-26

Surface: Gravel

Base: Naivasha, Kenya

2021 winners: Sebastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (Toyota Yaris WRC)

The world-famous Safari was back in the WRC for the first time since 2002 last June, 18 years, 11 months and 10 days since Colin McRae and Nicky Grist won the last version to count for the championship.

Big on challenge, spectacular scenery, zebras and the like, the eagerly anticipated return went pretty much to plan and delivered



the usual trouble and strife, particularly for Thierry Neuville who was leading comfortably when his Hyundai broke. The 2021 edition was

less punishing than previously though: the opening leg in 2002 was 10 miles longer than the entire timed route for event's WRC return.

Photos: Hyundai, mcklein-imagedatabase.com

Rally Estonia

When: July 14-17
Surface: Gravel
Base: Tartu
2021 winners: Kalle Rovanpera/Jonne Halttunen (Toyota Yaris WRC)
Rally Estonia signalled the restart of the WRC in 2020 following the Covid-enforced stoppage. And the championship returns to the event base in Tartu, Estonia's second-largest city in the south-east of the country, for the third time this July. The pace is relentless, like neighbouring Rally Finland, but has shown a propensity to shred tyres at an alarming rate which spices up the order. High-speed blasts across open countryside, tree-lined roads, jumps, crests and loads of fans define Estonia. A new powerstage, Kambja, is planned for 2022, while Tartu hosts the start and finish.



Rally Finland

When: August 4-7
Surface: Gravel
Base: Jyväskylä
2021 winners: Elfyn Evans/Scott Martin (Toyota Yaris WRC)
Speed and bravery matter most on Rally Finland, which is set for a summer slot following a rare running in the autumn last season due to Covid-based restrictions. The 70th anniversary in 2021 used a

largely untried route with only Harju, Laukaa and Ruuhimäki familiar to those who tackled the 2019 edition (the pandemic meant there was no rally in 2020). There was also a move to a more condensed format with the action run over three days rather than four. While a more conventional event is expected in 2022, don't expect the Finns not to tinker with the route.



Acropolis Rally

When: September 8-11
Surface: Gravel
Base: Lania, Greece
2021 winners: Kalle Rovanpera/Jonne Halttunen (Toyota Yaris WRC)
Punishing terrain and heat used to make the Acropolis one of the ultimate car and driver breakers. But while the event's return to the World Rally Championship in 2021 for the

first time since 2013 was anything but easy for those who made the journey to Greece, rain in the event's build-up made for a softening of the stages and the September date meant it wasn't as hot as the early summer fixtures of hold. Organisers did a stellar job to get the event back on the calendar and deliver a rally to be proud of, especially the Athens superspecial.

Rally New Zealand

When: September 29-October 2
Surface: Gravel
Base: Auckland
2021 winners: Event not held
Home of some of the best stages in the World Rally Championship, the WRC has missed New Zealand and New Zealand has missed the WRC with local folk happy to put their love of rugby to one side whenever the championship visited the country's spectacular North Island. While Auckland is confirmed as the host city, work on finalising the route is now underway. What is for sure, however, is there is no shortage of fast, sweeping, smooth gravel roads with their unique camber that make the rally a driver's dream. Jari-Matti Latvala likens the challenge to "dancing on gravel".



Rally Spain

When: October 20-23
Surface: Tarmac
Base: Salou
2021 winners: Thierry Neuville/Martijn Wydaeghe (Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC)
The 30th anniversary of Spain hosting the World Rally Championship in 2021 coincided with the event reverting to an all-asphalt affair following a move to a mixed-surface route in 2010, an attempt by organisers back then to make the rally less monotonous. One of only three pure Tarmac rallies on the calendar, the Catalonia-based counter is famous for its racing circuit-style stages, while the use of popular seaside resort Salou as its base creates a holiday-style atmosphere. It's also cheap and easy to get to, the food and drink is affordable and stage access is free. What's not to like?



Rally Japan

When: November 10-13
Surface: Asphalt
Base: Nagoya
2021 winners: Event not held
When Rally Japan last appeared on the WRC calendar in 2010, the event used all-gravel stages on the northerly Hokkaido island with Obihiro and then Sapporo its home. The hoped-for return in 2022 in the industrial city of Nagoya

on Honshu island, Japan's largest and most populous, has also signalled a move to a Tarmac-only event. The stages are based up in the mountains with roads Corsica-like in terms of width and corner frequency. With Japan's best rally driver, Takamoto Katsuta, a Nagoya native and Toyota currently the team to beat in the championship expect massive local support and interest. If Covid allows.

FEATURE

WORLD RALLY DOUBLE WHAMMY!

On the eve of the Monte Carlo Rally, M-Sport driver Gus Greensmith and team principal Rich Millener go in to bat for our readers' Q&A in conversation with **Nick Garton**



New-look: Millener, Breen, Fourmaux and Greensmith

Expectations have not been as high that M-Sport can reach for the stars in the World Rally Championship since Sebastien Ogier's title-winning spree came to an end for the British team in 2018.

The new era WRC begins in Monte Carlo with the Cumbrian squad having stolen a march on the competition in getting its fleet of four Ford Puma Rally1 machines ready and thoroughly tested. Big-name signings Craig Breen and Sebastien Loeb are sure to be contenders this season, but this is also the best chance that Manchester's Gus Greensmith could ask for to take the next step towards his WRC dream as well.

Under the watchful eye of Malcolm Wilson, Greensmith's team boss Rich Millener also enters a new era of management in which he must step up to challenge the works Toyota and Hyundai teams. So before these British heavyweights went in for the first bout of their 2022 campaign, they took time out to answer the MN readership's most searching questions...

Question: Where did your enthusiasm for rallying stem from?

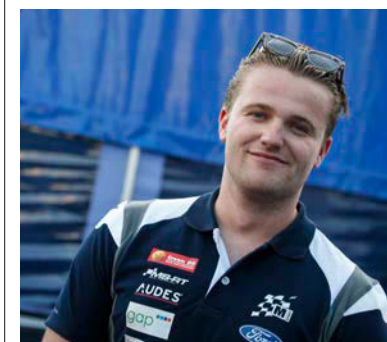
Peter Johnson

Via Twitter

Gus Greensmith: "The first thing I remember about rallying was that I had just started karting, maybe a couple of months after I had begun, and I was just going through the TV channels when Motors TV was a thing, and I saw Sebastien Loeb working his way down a very snowy mountain in Monaco in a Citroen C4. From that point then I was sold on rallying and never wanted to do anything else."

MN: It must be quite special for you to now be sharing an awning with him in Monte Carlo?

GG: "When I learned about when they were trying to make it happen last year it was pretty surreal! But now that he's my team-mate, my focus is mainly to beat him... but that's easier said than done for a nine-time World champion. In my opinion he and Lewis Hamilton are the two best drivers ever to walk the earth and



Greensmith wants podiums

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com, Red Bull Content Pool



Watching Loeb on Monte inspired Greensmith

“Loeb is one of the two the best drivers on the planet”

Gus Greensmith

I have so much respect for him that I’m just going to learn as much as I can in the time that I’m lucky enough to be able to spend with him this season.”

Question: *Kimi Raikkonen had to choose between ice hockey and motorsport as a kid, and you chose between football and motorsport – how did you manage to make that choice?*

Ben Barnes
Via Twitter
GG: “I was in a trial period for Manchester City and basically my dad had started doing some racing in the Fun Cup and, basically, I was taken aback by what motorsport was. I was quite happy to give up [football] at that point: there wasn’t really much of a thought process there. Motorsport was where I wanted to be, and then I discovered rallying was where I wanted to be most of all.”

MN: Kimi said that he chose karting instead of ice hockey because it meant that he didn’t have to get up as early in the morning for training – you come across as a little bit more focused than that!

GG: “I certainly wouldn’t say that Kimi is not focused, he’s a World champion! So I can’t entirely agree with that, but I enjoy everything that I’m doing. I still really enjoy football as well, I’m a football fan, but my true passion in life is rallying. . . and rallying doesn’t give you any extra sleep. I can tell you that!”

MN: Who do you support: Man City?

GG: “No, I’m a United fan! If United



Greensmith prepares to explain ‘the feeling’ once again to TV crews

would have taken me on I’d have said yes to playing for them but unfortunately City got there first! I go to a couple of matches a year if I’m lucky. . . I’d like to go to more but with the situation these days it’s probably not the wisest thing, given that avoiding Covid is quite important to be able to compete.”

Question: *Was circuit racing ever something you considered and does your karting background suit Tarmac events?*

Jody Scott
Via Twitter
GG: “I never really thought about going circuit racing after I saw rallying on the TV. I never thought about anything else and I would always say that Tarmac should be my strongest suit but for some reason it isn’t. Gravel seems to suit me better, I’ve still got some things to work on on Tarmac but I enjoy all surfaces, even if I have a bit of work to do on Tarmac”

Question: *As a young driver coming up through the ranks, which cars have been the most rewarding to drive beneath WRC level?*

Roger Cooke
Via Facebook
GG: “That’s quite a tough question! To be honest the car that probably grabs my attention most at the moment is something that I haven’t actually driven and that’s the new Rally3 car that M-Sport have made for the Junior World Championship. To me that’s a no-brainer and should have

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Incidents plagued 2020 but were eradicated from 2021 campaign



Greensmith’s WRC career has been spent with M-Sport, as shown here in 2017 WRC2 action in Portugal

FEATURE



Second-generation Fiesta R5 was a favourite

always been there, but I think it's going to be a big advantage to the drivers coming through the ranks soon when they get to learn all the stages in that level of their career with four-wheel drive.

"I would have loved to have driven one of them, but for me it's hard to say a particular car because I've driven Fords all my career from when I first started. From all of them, probably developing the Mk2 Fiesta R5 was the high point. Obviously, we took some good wins in that, so I think I'll say that the Mk2 was my favourite car to drive aside from the WRC Fiesta and now the Puma Rally1."

Question: *How important has it been to you to progress with M-Sport and what support do you get from that relationship?*

Martin Edgar

Via Twitter

GG: "I've learnt so much from M-Sport and they've always been so accommodating. They've always given me access to the factory to spend time

with the engineers and work on the cars and learn things – that's one of the big things I need to give credit to Malcolm for is that he's always been pushing for me to be there and to learn things. I think that's invaluable for drivers as they are going through their career. It does feel like a family, especially in these times with travel being the way that it is.

"No-one could go home after Rally Kenya [which was a Covid red zone at the time of the event last summer]. Because of that, we all had to stay out and then go testing in the weeks in between before Estonia and then do Estonia, so there were about 50 people in the team who hadn't been home or seen their families for six weeks. That just kind of shows you the passion that is in the team and for sure I was making a point to thank every single one of them because things like that make you appreciate how much hard work they put into this.

"That's what makes me put in even more hard work because everyone wants the same goals... One of the most important

things for me, to be fair, this past year was to develop the consistency that the team needs from me because I have always had the speed but in 2020 there were too many mistakes. We went from far too many to making just one mistake in the entire 2021 season, so I don't look at it as a negative."

Question: *Which are the rallies that have taken your breath away and which ones are you keenest to experience?*

Brenda Fellowes

Via Facebook

GG: "I can probably pick three different event for three different reasons. My favourite event is Portugal... it's just the atmosphere, the stages, the level of grip that you have and in the WRC cars it was just a dream to drive. It felt so special.

"But if you want to see exactly what the performance of a World Rally Car is and how unbelievable they are you go to Finland. You've got a high-speed rally where all the downforce comes in to play and the power and it's just incredible. You look at corners and you say to yourself

'there's no way that's flat!' and then you throw it in and find that it is!

"And then for the best experience there's Kenya. It's so different, it's so rough and you're going down these two-mile straights on the door handles but you don't know if there are any new holes formed and you don't know if there's going to be a giraffe in the road and every stage was just spectacular. It was amazing to drive them in the 2017 cars and it will be again in the hybrid as well.

"As for the rally I want to do most, I think everyone would say the same thing: New Zealand... I think it will be the best rally in the world in terms of what it feels like. I've been to New Zealand before and it's definitely one of my favourite places in the world. We haven't been able to get there for obvious reasons lately but everyone's just praying that we get there this year."

MN: As someone who likes a fast rally, what did you think of Ypres?

GG: "Not much! Some of it was enjoyable but it's not really my kind of rally. It was the only one that I thought was

maybe a bit more dangerous than it had to be... I would rather be going to Northern Ireland this year.

"If we go [to Ypres] I would prepare as hard as I could for it... so it doesn't make too much difference to me, but for sure I want to go to Northern Ireland.

"The cars are mentally fast, and I can tell you that no-one among the crews is bothered about the risks that we take or about going off. But you at least like to have a little bit of room for error to be able to get away with a small mistake, while Ypres was the one where, no matter how small the mistake, you were heading out of the rally, which was frustrating."

MN: Northern Ireland is still in the fight to be on the calendar this year, which would be special wouldn't it?

GG: "Yeah, I reckon we've got the best driver in the championship for that particular rally! Good old Craig [Breen] will be very helpful for helping us get the car set up right and brings a lot of experience to the team for that event. Craig's a lovely character, he's always been very pleasant to me, a great guy and I can't wait to work with him next year."

Question: *Every time I see you rally types on TV you get asked how 'the feeling' was. So, can you explain to us what exactly is 'the feeling' and what is your feeling about 'the feeling'?*

Matt James

Motorsport News

GG: "The feeling' is the feeling that I have when I'm driving, and the feeling of what I feel from the car while I'm driving. There's another feeling that I get when I'm asked questions by you guys [in the

"Sometimes you take risks when you're not 100% sure..."

Gus Greensmith



M-Sport team boss Rich Millener



Greensmith isn't a fan of Tarmac – particularly "dangerous" Ypres



Millener's first memory is of a flying Colin McRae



Breen has a long history with Millener and M-Sport



Greensmith battled hard for Safari podium in 2021

media] all the time about what I'm feeling. But it's just an easy way to describe things, I suppose. . .

"Feeling' is just a description that they [TV reporters] use to try and get the drivers to say something at the end of each stage. We don't have delta times or much information when they stick a microphone into the car, so we just have to go completely on 'feeling'. Circuit racers have far too much information to call on when they're driving!"

Question: *From the outside, looking at some sections of a stage with a few bends, you assume that the cars are going to lift but time and again you guys go through flat out. How are you able to judge that from a low-speed recce?*

Dennis Fairhurst
Via Facebook

GG: "It's 'the feeling'! That's what gives you the feeling that it's going to be OK! And then if you're in a big battle you may be start to push the boundaries that little bit further."

"Sometimes you start to take risks where you are taking things flat even if you're not 100% sure. You take it, based on the feel that you have for the car and your understanding of how much grip you're going to have and how much downforce you're going to have at that point and through experience."

"That's why you often see when stages are repeated the guys with more experience tend to do better than the new guys on those stages but on the first pass it's more of a blank sheet of paper for everyone, which tends to even things out a bit more."

MN: Have there been any occasions when you really surprised yourself a bit?

GG: "Me and Adrien [Fourmaux, Greensmith's M-Sport team-mate] had a really good battle in Kenya on the Saturday of last year and on some of those stages we were pushing pretty hard, especially on the second pass. He would beat me then I would beat him and then I would beat him and he would beat me. I think when you're in a battle you tend to push the boundaries a little bit more. But for sure I was pushing like hell in Portugal and we deserved a podium there but unfortunately some mechanical issues kind of prevented us from that."

"For this year we're feeling that the car's going to be a lot more competitive so I'm expecting that we're going to be on the limit and pushing the boundaries a lot more often."

MN: So a few sleepless nights ahead for Mr Millener, then?

GG (chuckling mischievously): "I think Rich is going to have a lot of sleepless nights this year. . . I do feel for him!"

Question: *How does Rally1 compare with WRC and what have you had to adapt to so far?*

Ed Jones
Via Facebook

GG: "They're faster and slower than each other in different ways. I have to say the team have done a pretty remarkable job in terms of how limiting the new regulations were supposed to be for the cars. The aero [reductions] and the active centre diff [removal] are going to cost us time in the Rally1 car because obviously we don't have them anymore."

"It's hard to say but I'm fairly confident that the Rally1 cars will be faster on Tarmac but on gravel it's yet to be seen. There is more weight and there is less assistance, really, so we'll have to see but for sure they are going to be just as spectacular on the stages."

Question: *Fourth place on the Safari was a major achievement last season. Which event do you think will bring your first podium at the top level – and how will you celebrate?*

Michelle Griffith
Via Facebook

GG: "I feel like we're going to have a good opportunity on every rally this year. I don't think we need to focus on particular rallies, we just need to be pushing for the podium on every event. Obviously, things can change in time but that's the opinion and feeling I have at the moment. I want the podium, I feel like we can definitely get it this year, if not a few, and I'll be very disappointed if I get to the end of the season and don't have a podium. So we're going to be pushing it."

"How will I celebrate? I'll definitely have a sore head for a couple of days afterwards. I'm pretty sure someone's going to be carrying me to some form of hotel but I'm pretty sure that I will not let that one go quietly!"

MN: Will your parents be there to celebrate with you?

GG: "My dad does come to every event, he's only ever missed two rallies in my life: the first was for my sister's 20th birthday, although he said that if things were going well he would fly out. The second was the Safari last year because

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Visiting the Prodrive service gave Millener a view of WRC teamwork



Millener's domain: M-Sport boss rose from parcel packer to principal

FEATURE



Portugal is Greensmith's favourite event but his eyes are on Rally NI



Multiple champ Ogier (r) gave a lot of confidence to the M-Sport team



M-Sport stole a march on rivals when WRC regs last changed in 2017

of the Covid red list, he couldn't be away from work for that amount of time, but he'll be in Monte Carlo and I'm 100% sure that he'll be at every rally this year. We have a very good relationship, as I do with my mum as well, I like to have my family at rallies and it's a nice feeling to have their support because we've put the effort in together as a family and I would like, when I do get that podium this year, I would like them to be there for it.

Team principal Rich Millener
Question: Where did your rally passion begin and did you envisage one day having the job that you do?
William Nesmith

Via Facebook
RM: "My dad was into road rallying, he had a Ford Escort Mk1 and a Mk2. He was always interested in cars, and you always want to get involved in anything that your dad does. The WRC was on Channel 4 back in those days, so I was watching that and one year he took me to Rally GB, the year that Colin had his big accident, he took me there as a weekend away. "So, the first car I ever saw on a stage, with my dad, was Colin. When I saw that Focus go past we both looked at each other and laughed at how ridiculously brilliant it was. It's what really got me hooked on it. "The second time that we went on Rally GB, he actually bought me a tour around Prodrive, in the service park when Petter Solberg was driving for them at that time, which was the first time that I got to see how things are done on a rally up close. "I continued to follow rallying through school and university, when I joined my local motor club and ended up going co-driving for a couple of people through that... after I finished at university I was working on my uncle's farm and looking for various jobs. I saw an advert at M-Sport to work packing up parcels, basically, and so I thought I'd give it a go. "That started me off on the road to where I am now. It's a bit of a dream-come-true

type of thing. It's been a long process, but I've been into rallying right from the start, so it's almost like a job that isn't a job now in some ways. "You sometimes miss being able to go out on the stages and see the cars. Going into the forests with like-minded people and having all the banter that used to go on... I remember being in Walters Arena when they were setting off fireworks across the hills at each other! "If you're into adventure and the outdoors and cars, then it's all of that rolled into one and seeing those cars up close is what sticks in your mind. You don't get to see all that in the service park..."

Question: How important is it to have had the grounding you've had coming through the ranks at M-Sport?

Peter Jackson
Via Facebook
RM: "A lot of people in higher roles in motorsport have come through a variety of different teams and set-ups and gained experience that way. For me it's arriving to pack parcels and working my way up to being where I am now via being a coordinator for championships, selling cars, selling parts, organising customer drive events, PR events for our partners, licencing and merchandising roles – you name it, I've done it. "I think that's been helpful in some ways, you know every corner of the business and if you can't do a job yourself you can't expect others to do it. Having a bit of a farming background helps as well in being a hands-on, get-on-and-do-it person. So, while I don't have much experience of companies outside the M-Sport business, I think that helps more than it doesn't."

Question: Malcolm Wilson previously mentioned that Craig Breen had worked in the workshops at some stage in his time at M-Sport in the past. What did he do and could he get a job

if the driving doesn't work out?
Phil Barry
Via Facebook
RM: "Craig was in the workshop and came round to my house for dinner and we used to hang out and stuff. He won that role as part of what was called the Fiesta Sport Trophy International back then, the pre-JWRC days, and the winner got a bit of an internship at M-Sport and that's where me and Craig actually worked together for the first time. "I was coordinating the Fiesta ST Championship and Craig was driving in it at that time and we both manage to joke about it now, how neither of us has managed to do anything better with our lives and we've come full circle!"
MN: Can you keep up with him as a rally geek?
RM (laughing): "I'm going to struggle on that. My areas of knowledge only go back to about 2001, when I first got interested in it. Craig goes right back to the 1970s and beyond with his knowledge, but if I had as much spare time as him, you know, because drivers have an easy life really, I could probably catch him up pretty quickly! I like to keep him grounded..."

Question: Does Rally1 make it more or less likely that we will see more privateers



Founder Wilson is an inspiration



Fourmaux's success meant more work for Millener

like Lorenzo Bertelli or an Ostberg or a Gryazin able to compete in future?

Henry Dalby

Via Facebook

RM: "It's more likely. That was the intention from the start: to make these cars viable for privateers. It's key to our business model and when you look at people like Hyundai as well, who now have a very successful Rally2 business, we want to see these cars in the hands of those people... Yes, it's considerable money but there are people and teams who want to compete at that level and we want to see them there as well. We want to get these cars in the hands of customer teams."

Question: How many more common components are there in the Rally1 cars than in the WRC cars that the teams have built in recent years?

Lee Mathison

Via Facebook

RM: "There's a crossover of the engines, which were frozen at the end of last year so the combustion element is the same. That controls costs very well. The chassis is completely new, a spaceframe now as opposed to using a production car chassis, so that can help in the long run with some cost reductions because you don't have to work around the difficulties that come

with a production shell. You can build cars in a much more efficient way.

"The hybrid unit that we're working with in 2022 is a standard unit. Every manufacturer has the same off-the-shelf unit that allows us to keep the costs controlled. We've reduced the cost of the hydraulic system so the car should be a little bit simpler but we've got extra hybrid power and we're sure that they will still be a very exciting car to watch."

Question: What's given you the most headaches in the past couple of years – Rally1, Semiconductors, Brexit or Covid?

Graham Smith

Via Twitter

RM: "All of the above! Semiconductors not so much because a lot of our electronics are outsourced so we're not as badly off as the manufacturers. Covid? Very difficult. Particularly coming up to Monte Carlo when there are a lot more people catching Covid at the moment and then being isolation. We had 15 people off last week, which is a considerable number when we're trying to build four cars."

"Travel restrictions with Covid have been very tricky. Costs have increased, flights have been cancelled, quite often we had to drive down to London to fly anywhere because there weren't any local

options, which has a knock-on effect.

"Brexit? It's meant applying for carnets when taking trucks abroad, all the paperwork involved in sending parts, getting parts delivered to places outside the UK on an express delivery – and that is almost impossible, really. I'm sure it will get better, but I suspect it will take another two years and it's difficult to do things like employ foreign workers when a lot of our engineers and mechanics come from overseas. People from around the world want to work in rally."

"Then there's the costs of raw materials which have been affected by both Covid and Brexit. When you are looking at Rally2/3/4/5 cars that are cost-controlled by the FIA and we've seen from our suppliers 40-80% price rises, that makes it really difficult for us to build and sell cars within the regulations and still make money. So, it's definitely a challenging time... but it's what I enjoy."

Question: Are you as fit as your drivers and can you run or cycle better than any of them?

Vicki Davies

Via Twitter

RM: "I think I can swim better than most of them, that's my strong point. Fitness-wise they can probably outdo me, they don't eat as much chocolate as I do, but I

like to think in a long-distance race I could have most of them."

MN: It must be good for your relationships with the drivers to be able to go for a run together?

RM: "I can't really sit down and tell them where they're going wrong in the way that, say, Jari-Matti can, but it's a good way to build relationships with the drivers... in those relaxed situations, on a run or on the bike. It can only help."

Question: There was so much excitement around Adrien Fourmaux last year, how did you help him deal with it?

David Saunders

Via Facebook

RM: "Young drivers often... perform very well because there's no pressure and then suddenly they're expected to do well every time. And they're aware that people are talking about them, that more people want their time around each event, the pressure builds and then you have a couple of bad rallies and the pressure increases overnight."

"Both Gus and Adrien have had a lot to contend with as they have been getting to grips with the job and we've done as much as we can to shield them."

"And they've been running very close in terms of their pace and people are comparing them positively and negatively and Malcolm's always said that it can take five years from jumping into the World championship to reaching a consistent level."

"You look at Ott [Tanak], you look at Thierry [Neuville] and you look at Elfyn [Evans] he's about right. They all got dropped by the team at some point. That's where the team helps, and I do think that it's been tricky for Adrien but it's the same for all young drivers and the ones who cope with it the best are the ones who end up fighting for the championship."

Question: What was it like having Sebastien Ogier on the team and what did you learn from him that you now instil in the young drivers coming through?

Greg Patterson

Via Facebook

RM: "He's clearly one of the best drivers out there, and some of the championships that he has won were so difficult that it proves that in many ways."

"And he's a really nice guy, I still see him occasionally. What did I learn from him? I think he helped first by giving us confidence. I remember we asked him where we needed to improve compared to Volkswagen at that time, and he said that in most areas we were at the same level, some a little better, some maybe needed a bit but there was nothing crazy."

Question: You've got the 'Greatest of All Time' joining you in 2022, Sebastien Loeb. Is the team under more pressure as a result?

David Doyle

Via Facebook

RM: I don't really know him yet, but there's nothing I can see to put us under pressure. He's had to deal with everything in the world during his career, so he's not looking for us to give him something that he lacks; it's just a question for us of making sure we have everything that he needs. The guys in the workshop are very motivated to work with him. I think he's going to be a key character to help the younger guys, and Craig Breen has someone he's worked with before at Hyundai to bounce ideas off."

"I think that if you'd told us even late last year that we'd be lining up for the Monte Carlo Rally with Sebastien Loeb we wouldn't have believed it, but after a lot of hard work we're really happy. ■

"The first car I saw on a stage was Colin..."

Rich Millener



Loeb (l) caused M-Sport much pain, but joins the team for Monte

FEATURE



Wheel-to-wheel action: Rivals Verstappen and Hamilton

LEWIS AND MAX: UNCOVERING THE ROOTS OF F1'S FIERCEST RIVALRY

The two F1 rivals have already amassed quite a history of on-track spills. By **James Roberts**



That final lap in Abu Dhabi 2021 has already gone down in F1 folklore

A month on from that final lap in Abu Dhabi and emotions are still running high. The acrimony between fans of Lewis Hamilton and Max Verstappen continues to be as vitriolic as ever. Meanwhile pressure is mounting on the FIA to take meaningful action following the decisions made by race director Michael Masi in those crucial final moments of the title decider.

And the continued presence of Formula 1's biggest name remains in question as Mercedes says Lewis is "disillusioned" with the sport and its credibility.

The events of Abu Dhabi were an unfortunate, but perhaps inevitable, result of one of the most hard-fought World championship campaigns for many years. The one-sided domination of Mercedes in the turbo-hybrid era (dating back to 2014) has meant battles between rival teams have not been commonplace.

Up until last year, Verstappen and Red Bull had weekends where they were competitive, but unable to sustain a year-long challenge. That changed in 2021.

The seeds of this driving duel were sown a while back. When Verstappen first burst onto the F1 scene it was inevitable his trajectory would take him on a direct collision course with Hamilton.

His arrival in F1 mirrored that of the British driver, who also rocked the establishment when he made his own debut in 2007. The pair have many similarities, sharing the same blend of speed, overtaking prowess and a relentless desire to win. But they also approach their

racing from different perspectives.

With more experience, Hamilton plays the percentages and will outfox an opponent with his racecraft. He also prides himself on his clean combat. In contrast Verstappen is ruthless. He makes his presence known on the circuit, using every millimetre of asphalt to defend his position or to execute a pass. It's his youthful confidence, verging on arrogance, that makes him so thrilling to watch. But how did this rivalry evolve to become one of the most bitter in the 72-year history of the Formula 1 World championship?

The arrival of Verstappen

It's rare for drivers to make their grand prix debut before they have passed their driving test, but Max was clearly an exceptional talent when he arrived in F1 back in 2015.

He'd impressed by hauling his Toro Rosso to fourth in the rain at Austin and pulled off the overtaking move of the year, passing the hapless Felipe Nasr around the outside of Blanchimont, the fastest corner at the daunting Spa-Francorchamps.

Older drivers expressed reservation about his willingness to get physical on track, but Max simply responded that he raced this way so they must "deal with it."

His strong start led to a sudden switch to Red Bull for the following year's Spanish Grand Prix – which he memorably won. At that race Hamilton crashed on the opening lap with Mercedes team-mate Nico Rosberg. This was the last time his race ended in the gravel trap until clashing with Verstappen at Monza last year.

The circumstances around Verstappen's first win are well-known, but it was his second victory, in Malaysia at the end of

2017, that was perhaps more significant. In the early stages of the race, at a hot and humid Sepang, Max made his first meaningful pass of Hamilton, on the brakes into Turn 1 to take the race lead.

On the slow-down lap, Hamilton pulled alongside the Red Bull and showed his appreciation for the victory by applauding his rival. He was aware there was a new talent on the grid and in the early stages of their relationship there was respect. But that wasn't to last long...

The first clash

Fast-forward to Bahrain at the beginning of 2018, and lowly grid placings for both meant Verstappen and Hamilton were fighting over 10th place in the opening laps of the grand prix. On the stretch down to Turn 1, the Mercedes defended its position, but Max ran deep on the brakes and forced Hamilton wide. As he placed his car to counterattack Verstappen at the subsequent kink, the Dutchman continued to block Lewis. They made contact and the Red Bull man picked up a left-rear puncture; Hamilton went on to finish third.

In the cool-down room before the podium, Hamilton rewatched the skirmish between the pair on a TV screen and, unaware a camera was recording his reaction, described Verstappen as a "dickhead" for his swipe across the front of his car.

When Hamilton was later quizzed about his comment in the post-race press conference, Sebastian Vettel (who can be seen trying not to smirk when Hamilton first criticises Max) tries to defuse the simmering situation. "I don't think it's justified to give us

Photos: Motorsport Images



The supreme talents: Max and Lewis



Verstappen won his second race in '17 by passing Lewis

these questions and make a story out of nothing,” said Vettel. “When we are racing we are full of adrenaline and sometimes we say these things, it’s a human reaction.”

Despite Vettel’s attempts to control the fire, when asked for his response, Hamilton didn’t fully extinguish the flames.

“There needs to be a certain respect between drivers... and it didn’t feel like a respectful manoeuvre. Ultimately it was a silly manoeuvre for himself, because he didn’t finish the race. And he [Max] is tending to make quite a few mistakes recently so it was unnecessary for him to do that.”

Ding, ding. Round 2!

Days later at the 2018 Chinese Grand Prix, Verstappen was asked for a reply to what Lewis had said: “It’s quite easy and simple to blame the younger driver,” said Max. “That’s the only way I can see it. Like I said, these things happen. There’s no reason for me to change anything.”

On the same day Hamilton had met Verstappen in the fan signing area of the Shanghai circuit and the pair shook hands.



Max’s slip up in Brazilian GP 2018

But three days after their rapprochement, they clashed again on-track. This wasn’t a non-story, this was two prize fighters sizing each other up.

On this occasion Verstappen thought he could overtake Hamilton around the outside of the flat-out Turn 7, the long left-handed sweep before the track switches back to the right. During the move, Hamilton gently ran wide, which forced Verstappen off-line and onto the grass. Max then picked up a penalty for crashing into Vettel at the hairpin. It was the sort of tactic that Lewis had often employed on Rosberg, but produced a response that was typical Max in 2018: exciting to watch, but accident prone.

After the race I was in the Mercedes hospitality unit listening to Hamilton answer questions about what had just unfolded. His answer to one query prompted me to write a column in that week’s MN about the growing rivalry.

He was asked whether he himself had ever attempted to overtake another driver around the outside of Turn 7 – the move which had prompted Max’s error. Lewis’s reply was emphatic: “Not on any of the top guys...”

In MN that week we said the relationship was reminiscent of the time a young Michael Schumacher collided with Ayrton Senna at Magny-Cours in 1992. The suggestion then was that the elder statesman wanted the youngster to show more “respect”. Was history repeating?

More shenanigans

The next big flashpoint between Hamilton and Verstappen came at Monaco in 2019. In the wake of Niki Lauda’s death, Lewis wore a tribute helmet and was motivated to commemorate his passing with victory. Verstappen had other ideas, trying to force his way past the Mercedes but, as ever, overtaking was a near impossibility on the tortuous streets.

On the penultimate lap, Verstappen had a run out of the tunnel and sensed his opportunity to overtake Hamilton for the win. As they approached the chicane, the gap narrowed and Lewis cut across the kerb to retain his lead. Cue outrage from both camps. This rivalry was intensifying...

A few races later, the pair were duelling on another notoriously tough track to overtake on: the Hungaroring. This was significant as for the first time, it was Verstappen who was ahead and Hamilton was trying to find a way past. As the pair drifted around the Turn 2 hairpin, Hamilton positioned his Mercedes for an attack up the hill into the fast Turn 4 left-hander. Max wasn’t prepared to yield and Lewis ran off the road. He was ahead of the Red Bull but was forced to give the place back.

This is when Mercedes changed its tactics. It was clear that Max wasn’t an easy pass on tyres of a similar age, so

“Lewis: ‘Max had more to lose in Brazil’”

Lewis Hamilton



Verstappen refused to yield position to Hamilton in Bahrain 2018



Hamilton admonished Verstappen after Chinese battle in 2018



Hamilton fended off the charging Dutchman at Monte Carlo in 2019

Lewis dropped into the pits for fresh rubber and closed the gap back down to the leading Red Bull. In the closing stages of the race, Verstappen had no answer for Lewis’s superior grip – and the Brit took the win.

Less haste, more speed

Earlier, at the Brazilian Grand Prix in 2018, Verstappen had held victory in his sights. Then he came up to lap the Force India of Esteban Ocon and the pair made contact. Verstappen was furious and after the race aggressively confronted the Frenchman. Once again, in the green room before the podium, Hamilton (who had inherited the win) was chatting to second-placed Verstappen about the incident. Although Ocon was to blame for the crash, Hamilton couldn’t help telling Verstappen he had a part to play in the contact.

“But he is allowed to unlap himself...” said Lewis. “Yeah, yeah I know, but I mean you can’t crash into the leader can you?” replied Max. But Lewis wasn’t going to let it lie: “You had more to lose than he did, he had nothing to lose and you had it all.” That was met with silence from Max.

In the early part of last year, the on-track battles between Hamilton and Verstappen followed this narrative. Hamilton had calculated he could beat the Red Bull over the course of a season by having fewer retirements. Hence why at the first corner at both Imola and Spain, he chose to run wide, rather than make contact with his rival. They were constantly being questioned about the inevitability of a crash. Then we came to Silverstone...

F1’s greatest rivalry?

What makes for a good rivalry in sport? Part of what made last season so dramatic was the slow-burn flare up over the past few years between the two protagonists. It’s similar to how Senna made his mark in F1 and then finally got the chance to confront Alain Prost. Equally, both Fernando Alonso and Mika Hakkinen were identified as prospects to one day challenge the great Schumacher – which they eventually did.

In addition, these examples have the classic generational changing of the guard narrative. The eternal story of the established master coming up against a youthful challenger who is desperate to steal the throne. And they too must face that fate themselves one day.

A battle between differing teams also brings an added dynamic. There is a clash of styles and culture. At the heart of both Mercedes and Red Bull are two English racing teams. But from an ownership perspective there is a corporate car manufacturer vying against an entrepreneurial energy drink. Max is adored by his fanatical Orange Army, while Sir Lewis – a knight of the realm – is a talisman for diversity and social responsibility. They have their differences, but are very closely matched. For most of last season they were in a league of their own, miles up the road from the opposition.

Finally, as well as the flashpoints, it was the intensity of last season that made their battle so compelling. This wasn’t a single boxing match, it was played out over 22 weekends. Despite the final outcome (the view of which will depend on who you support) it was a fabulous contest. The hope now is that we get to see it again. ■

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FEATURE

TVR AT LE MANS 2003: THE WILL TO GO ON

Nearly two decades ago, Mike Jordan tried everything he could to keep a TVR running at Le Mans. He told **Paul Lawrence** the previously unpublished story



TVR's tale at Le Mans was a story of sheer persistence

For a British national racer, competing at Le Mans is often the big career ambition and over the years it has become harder and harder for non-professional racers to be part of the French round-the-clock classic.

Back in 2003, Jordan had recently been a star of TVR Tuscans before competing at FIA level in GT3 Porsches. When TVR put together a two-car Le Mans team for 2003 with a pair of T400Rs run by the Racesports Salisbury team with backing from DeWalt, Jordan was selected as one of the six drivers.

It proved to be an unforgettable experience that was, ultimately, destined to fail but not before Jordan had attempted an outrageous

bush repair at the side of the track.

Some 19 years later, Jordan explains: "Richard Stanton had put the team together and he put me in with my old mate Michael Caine and Tim Sugden. We knew it was going to be a tough ask to finish the race because it was a TVR, and we'd done a lot of engines when we went to do the official test day. The cars were only just at the beginning of a development curve."

Jordan and Caine agreed that a finish in one of the world's toughest races would be a victory for the Blackpool squad and decided to run at a pace that gave the sometimes fragile T400R its best chance of crossing the finish line on Sunday afternoon.

The TVRs had qualified 44th and 49th of the 50 starters, with the Jordan/Caine/Sugden car ahead but still a full 10 seconds down on the fastest of the Porsches in the GT category. "We

couldn't compete with the Porsches and Ferraris, but it was just an amazing thing to do," says Jordan.

On race morning, June 14, Jordan sat on the pitwall with Carl Gray, a pivotal figure in making Jordan's long-term sponsorship deal with John Guest so successful. "We just looked at each other and said: 'can you believe that we're at Le Mans from where we started?'"

Twenty-four years earlier, Jordan's first race had been at Aintree in a Morris Minor, when he could barely afford enough petrol for the journey home.

Soon after Le Mans' 1600hrs start things started to go wrong for the TVR team, and the sister car of Stanton, Richard Hay and Rob Barff lasted just 11 laps before being eliminated with accident damage sustained in a clash with a prototype. Barely 50 minutes into the race the team was down to one car.

The Jordan car ran better over the first six hours with each driver taking a stint as afternoon led into evening. "We'd done a couple of stints," says Jordan. "I was in it and just heard the diff start to play up a bit. I radioed in and said I was bringing it in a bit early because we had a problem with the diff. I came in and it had broken one diff mounting and we fixed it."

Around 2200hrs, Sugden came in for a driver change to Caine. "Sugden brought it in and didn't say there was anything wrong," says Jordan. "As Caine left the pit and headed down the pitlane he said: 'I don't know what on earth is wrong with this.' There was something hanging out the back of the car and it had basically broken the rear joint on the propshaft and disc."

Caine set out on a full lap to try and get the car back to the pits. He coaxed it as far as he could and got about halfway

round the lap, but on the run down to Indianapolis it stopped, and he radioed the pits to tell the team that he'd parked the car. Immediate retirement seemed likely, but Jordan had other ideas.

"I've never been one that could go to something like [the Le Mans 24 Hours] and just be a driver," he says. "Me and three of the mechanics went out on a quad bike to where it was broken. At Le Mans, you're not supposed to get within three metres of the car, but you can shout directions to the driver. There was a gap in the barriers, and they'd pulled the car back and it was literally parked in the woods."

"There were some French marshals, and they were very nice and we're trying to describe to Caine what he needed to do. It was basically a case of trying to get the gearbox tunnel off to see what had failed. Michael's a good driver, but he's not an engineer



The two TVR Tuscans rumbled around La Sarthe in the 2003 edition

"We just couldn't believe we were at Le Mans"

Mike Jordan



The sun went down on Jordan's Le Mans assault as night fell

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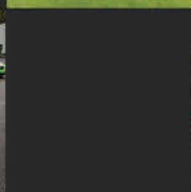
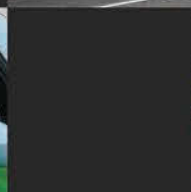
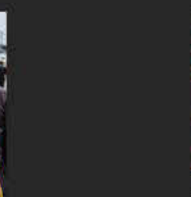
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FEATURE

Photos: Motorsport Images



Jordan's TVR completed a total of 93 laps in 2003



Caine, Sugden and Jordan mop up the cheers of the crowd



Lofty company: TVR made up the GT entry

and he can't pick up a screwdriver. "After a while we realised that we were making no progress and we're still chatting to the friendly French marshals. One of them said he really liked the car, and it was a beautiful car. So, I thought 'let's seize the moment here' I said it would be more beautiful if it was back on the track, but the problem was that he's a really good driver but a shit mechanic!" Jordan told the marshals that he was both a racer and a mechanic, so could he take over from Caine? "Non! Absolutely not. What if they see in race control?" said the marshal. I replied: "Who's going to see? We're in the middle of a forest. It's pitch black in middle of the night! Nobody, but nobody's going to know." Luckily, after some more pleading, the marshal finally relented. "OK. You swap," said the marshal. "He comes

back here, and you try and finish the car." Jordan continues the story: "The TVR guys were going and getting the tools and leaving them behind the tree on the other side of the car so I could go and get them. But I needed to jack the bloody thing got because we suss what had happened; it had broken the rear prop universal joint. "I'd got to get it jacked up because I couldn't get it from above and I needed to drop the flat floor off. I'd got to be bold, so I went to the French marshal and said: 'Have you got a jack in your car?' Fortunately, his car was parked close by and he leant me his bottle jack. "I jacked it up and kept putting it on bits of log and I managed to get under the car. I got the flat floor off and I could see where it was broken." One of the mechanics left on the quad bike to get the spare propshaft from the

pit garage, but that also went wrong as a potentially fixable problem headed towards becoming a farce. The route from paddock involved a short stretch of public road and the mechanic was clocked for going too fast and was promptly arrested by the gendarmes. The guys with the car got the phone call: 'I've been arrested, and they've confiscated the quad and the spare propshaft.' Seemingly, it was all over and Caine and the mechanics told Jordan to quit. But he was still determined to try and get the car mobile enough to get it back to the pits and, hopefully, back into the race. "I said to get me the biggest tie-wraps they could get because if I could bind the yoke onto the shaft, we might just get it back to the pits. By then I'm obsessed with not retiring from the race and I'd been lying under the car for about an

hour and a half. Finally, I thought I'd got it on there pretty damn good. I put the flat floor back on and got the car down on the ground again. "We fired it up and the marshal said that you must change because it has to be the same pilot." So, Caine and Jordan swapped over again. "I said to Caine 'if you can just get it edging forward, for God's sake don't stop because if you can just get it driving, I think you'll be OK and you'll get it back to the pits.' We're on the mud between the trees and he just got it moving forward and then the engine died and just as it died, he gave it a little blip to keep it running. He let the clutch in and bang, it failed. I was in tears." They were all devastated after two hours of blood, sweat and tears. Caine said: "Mate, you've done everything you could." But Jordan's reply was that he didn't do it, he didn't get the

car back into the race. "The marshal said he had to phone to get the recovery truck out to take the car and driver back to the pits but the rest of us had to go. It was where the golf course is down by the end of the Mulsanne straight," says Jordan. "So, there was me, I think the late Michael 'Cushty' Tallentire and two or three other TVR mechanics in the pitch black in the middle of this bloody French golf course, not knowing where we were. It was probably about a four-mile walk back to the pits as we'd got no quad. We had no torch as I'd borrowed one from the marshal to work on the car. "So, we walked the whole way back and I was covered in shit from trying to get the car going. We got back to the pitlane and everyone else had gone. They were back at the hotel! An Allan McNish-style Le Mans, it certainly wasn't! "Caine and I were in the same mindset," says Jordan. "Just keep doing whatever we needed to try and get it to the end, because for all the TVR fans there it was going to be mega if we finished. As racing drivers, this was probably the only chance we'd ever get to race at Le Mans." For Sugden, this was the second of eight attempts at Le Mans. Caine did get another chance a year later with the Chamberlain-Synergy team in a T400R, but the 2003 adventure was Jordan's only shot at one of the world's biggest races. ■

"Caine is a great driver but a dreadful mechanic"

Mike Jordan



A rear joint on the propshaft failed just as Tim Sugden handed the car over to team-mate Michael Caine

REPORT

IN BRIEF

Bird out for Snett

Frank Bird says he and Jack Morton expect to miss the fifth round of the MNCRC season at Snetterton. Bird, who has taken three victories in the championship this season including winning at Brands Hatch, has ruled himself out of the rally in Norfolk due to racing commitments in Asia. He's also looking at options for a return to GT racing in Britain and GT World Challenge for the coming season.

Stone happy with Polo

Several familiar faces made their return to the championship at Brands Hatch, one of those being John Stone who finished second overall in the event behind Bird. Stone, in a Volkswagen Polo GTI, entered as a non-championship entrant and was therefore ineligible for MNCRC points, but he and Tom Woodburn impressed with their new R5 machine ahead of the East Riding Stages on January 27.

Hollamby wins in MX-5

The series welcomed ex British touring car racer Shaun Hollamby to the Brands Hatch event last weekend, winning the invitational MX-5 class. The former BTCC boss and driver, who made 32 starts with his own AmD Tuning Squad, entered a Paul Sheard-backed Mazda MX-5 for his home rally. "I'm just getting used to it again but really enjoying it," said Hollamby, who finished the event 49th overall and the top MX-5 class competitor.

Cuniff's new job

Shaun Hollamby's co-driver for the rally in Kent was Sion Cuniff, normally a navigator for Rob Hughes in the championship. Cuniff read the notes for Hollamby in the Sheard-prepared Mazda MX-5 after striking a deal in the New Year to take part in the event, and admitted he intends to be out at Snetterton with another driver. Hughes' Ford Fiesta is out of action for the time being as it takes on engine and gearbox refreshments before its intended return to the stages.

Return for Tilburn

The family pairing of Steve and Jack Tilburn joined the stages once more in their Ford Escort Mk2. The duo were often giant-killers in the series and maintained a push for a class title two seasons ago but intend to compete in further rallies after narrowly missing out on MN spoils in Class D to Jeremy Straker and Martin Hodgson. "The car was sat there in the garage for over a year during lockdowns", said Steve. "I went back to it and noticed the master cylinders were looking a bit furry, while the handbrake was jamming too, so we got the work on it and it feels just like it did again. It's been great fun."

BIRD KEEPS UP THE MOMENTUM AT BRANDS

Dan Mason watched the Ford Fiesta man dominate on the Kent Tarmac



Three and easy: Yet more success for Bird

Frank Bird and Jack Morton continued their seemingly invincible form with a third victory of the 2021-22 Motorsport News Circuit Rally Championship season at Brands Hatch last weekend.

Circuit racer Bird has begun to make a habit of winning in his third season of rallying, and he headed to Kent as the firm favourite having won the same event two years ago – its last running after the January rally succumbed to Covid last year.

Another consistent theme from the previous meeting at Donington in December would be the uncertainty on tyre choice early doors with the number one seed setting the trend by opting for a wet Michelin compound to make best use of the green track conditions on a foggy morning.

After the morning's opening brace of stages, Bird explained: "It's really slippery so I think we'll be staying on wets for much of the day."

He used the rubber and the kerb at Graham Hill Bend on his way, churning out a lead of 17 seconds early on.

His nearest rival would be a welcome returnee John Stone, a former frontrunner in the MNCRC. Armed with an upgraded Volkswagen Polo GTI R5, he split the title contenders early on as Cadwell Park winner Neil Roskell gave chase in third overall in his Ford Fiesta, the latter with a longer-term goal still firmly on his mind.

"I've got to look at what Barry [Morris] is doing for the championship," said

Roskell, already eyeing a fourth-successive podium to defend his early championship lead. "It's my first time at Brands too so I'm still trying to master the main corners like Druids and Graham Hill Bend. I'll get there!"

Bird admitted that he was bedding himself back into the groove initially as he settled into a close fight with Stone. However Ford Fiesta Rally2 driver Bird kept his focus to complete a clean sweep of the morning's four stages. His charge was then given a sudden boost by a more dramatic moment for his nearest rival as Stone's Polo whacked itself off the concrete wall when tipping through the tight right-hand flick into the rally school section.

"Luckily I think we've got away with it," was the driver's initial assessment, hemorrhaging 15s to Bird to expand the leader's cushion to 37s, but relieved to have been protected by strengthened components added to the Polo's front corner – something that arguably saved Stone's rally.

Behind the pair, Roskell was the first to make a switch of rubber, moving to an intermediate tyre compound for the fourth stage of the day as the fog lifted significantly. It warranted a positive step for the chaser as he settled into a battle for third spot, holding back the ever-improving Ollie O'Donovan who was entering his second rally of the season alongside former competitor Ashleigh Morris.

Although enjoying more confidence with his latest tyre choice, Roskell's biggest



Contact with a chicane dented John Stone's hopes of overall glory

issue would be traffic as he lost time merging in behind the Ford Fiesta of Darrell Taylor – who later retired – on the same stage, lying six seconds off of second place by the halfway stage.

Up front, Bird's charge recommenced with another fastest time in the fifth run, but Stone's impact clearly had no lasting effect as he almost matched the in-form rally leader with just a two-second deficit conceded.

"The car feels brilliant," said Stone, who

would only surrender a further six seconds to Bird with two stages to go. However, as darkness began to fall, Bird was suddenly unleashed.

The outcome was a sublime blast through the penultimate stage to put himself firmly out of sight, confirming victory on SS8 by pulling out the gap to over a minute on Stone to complete a third success of the season.

"It was a great way to start the year," said Bird, after 28s gained on the final two

Photos: SMJ Photography



Roskell was the model of consistency



John Griffiths has shown he has adapted well to the Ford Fiesta

CLASSES



Joshua and Tamsyn Davey kept the Darrian running to prevail

LUCK FINALLY CHANGES FOR DARRIAN PAIR

It appeared to be a case of keeping it in the family across the numerous classes. There were no fewer than five winning teams sharing with their namesakes, while three sibling pairings took the headlines.

The brother-and-sister team of Joshua and Tamsyn Davey showed further signs their bad luck is fading with a fine win in Class C, as the Darrian T90 showed its pace could also couple with reliability for a confidence-boosting victory in Josh Payton's absence.

It was brothers galore elsewhere. Ben and Andrew Wilkinson were the talk of the field in Class B, but it wasn't a

straightforward success. With ground to gain in the class championship, the Peugeot 106 Maxi pair were barely separated from Alex Cannon's Ford Fiesta during the rally. Wilkinson attacked initially and survived a last-stage charge by Cannon to win by 12s.

Bucking the trend further, local favourites Christopher and Anthony Newton picked up from where they left off by winning on their return to the championship in their Class A Vauxhall Nova. The pair dominated this event most recently and once again looked untouchable on the way to finishing an impressive 17th overall out of 78

finishers. They were also 13 spots clear of nearest class rival Mark Constantine, with Adam Ripper's Nissan Micra third.

Class D was opened up somewhat by mechanical maladies that afflicted Barry Morris, but a Darrian driver still emerged on top. Jeremy Straker took the honours with a clever drive to eighth overall, beating away the Escort Mk2s of Martin Hodgson and Steve Tilburn.

Kevin and Lee Jones were triumphant in Class H in their Mk1 Escort, with the spoils shared in E1 by the Mitsubishi Lancer E3 RS duo of Wayne and Archie Larbalestier. Overall winners Bird and Morton were also rewarded with E2 Class victory.

stages cemented his success. "I was blowing away the cobwebs a bit this morning, but once it started to dry up I started attacking more."

Roskell came home a solid third to meet his target after driving "better than ever" following a switch to slicks across the field, maintaining a 100% podium record this season.

More importantly for the series leader was that his points advantage grew significantly due to nearest rival Barry Morris finishing down in 77th, making it home after suffering misfires since the start of the day with his Darrian T90 GT-R.

"You can't always have a good day," bemoaned Morris. "Hopefully that's our one bit of bad luck out the way."

Fourth place went the way of the impressive John Griffiths in his Ford Fiesta, continuing to show improvements on his switch from Subaru to Ford machinery. Griffiths chased Roskell hard into the evening, aided by the removal of a flying O'Donovan on the penultimate stage after the experienced rallycross racer's day was effectively destroyed by a 10-minute penalty for striking a chicane in the afternoon.

While a possible podium eluded the Hyundai driver, another Ford Fiesta regular, Andy Scott, challenged for fastest stage times during the day and was eventually rewarded with a top-five finish ahead of the impressive Josh Davey in his Darrian. Davey had previously been suffering from a rotten run of hard luck, but the reliability

woes could be put to one side as he dominated his class to take the fight to the quicker machinery on route to sixth overall in the final classification.

Craig Jones (Ford Fiesta) enjoyed a strong run himself to seventh overall with a consistent day, beating the next Darrian of Jeremy Straker and the Fiesta of Alistair Inglis who backed up his Donington form with a top-10 performance. Martin Hodgson won a brilliant intra-Ford Escort Mk2 tussle for the final spot in the top 10 with the returning Steve Tilburn, who came up short by just one second at the final time check after a last-gasp effort from Hodgson was enough to take the place back.

RESULTS			
Brands Hatch Stages Rally Motorsport News Circuit Rally Championship: Round 4			
POS	DRIVER/CO-DRIVER	CAR	TIME
1	Frank Bird/Jack Morton	Ford Fiesta R2	42m50s
2	John Stone/Tom Woodburn	Volkswagen Polo GTI R5	+1m17s
3	Neil Roskell/Andrew Roughead	Ford Fiesta R5	+1m22s
4	John Griffiths/Tom Rogers	Ford Fiesta R5	+1m46s
5	Andy Scott/Laura Connell	Ford Fiesta R5	+1m48s
6	Joshua Davey/Tamsyn Davey	Darrian T90	+2m26s
7	Craig Jones/Shawn Layland	Ford Fiesta R5	+2m28s
8	Jeremy Straker/Simon May	Darrian T90 GT-R5	+2m37s
9	Alistair Inglis/Will Atkins	Ford Fiesta R5	+3m02s
10	Martin Hodgson/Tony Jones	Ford Escort Mk2	+3m11s

Class winners: Bird/Morton; Christopher Newton/Anthony Newton (Vauxhall Nova); Ben Wilkinson/Andrew Wilkinson (Peugeot 106 Maxi); J Davey/T Davey; Straker/May; Wayne Larbalestier/Archie Larbalestier (Mitsubishi Lancer E3); Kevin Jones/Lee Jones (Ford Escort Mk1); Shaun Hollamby/Sion Cunliffe (Mazda MX-5).



Fans loved the close-up action



Champion Morris was hit with a misfire

COLUMNIST

SEB HOPKINS



The 16-year-old has big ambitions for his British GT freshman campaign in a Team Parker Racing GT4 Porsche

Photos: Porsche AG, Jakob Ebrey



Youngster steps up to British GT4



Hopkins' ultimate aim is to race at Le Mans

It was a pretty out-of-the-blue opportunity to drive with Team Parker Racing in British GT this year in a GT4 Porsche. As soon as my dad and I heard about it we really wanted to pursue it: a 16-year-old driving a Porsche around tracks like Spa is not something to say no to.

I've worked really closely with coach Chris Hodgetts in Ginetta Juniors these past two years and he came to us with the opportunity; he introduced us to Parker and it went on from there.

It was definitely the sort of opportunity we had been thinking about. I preferred the GT route over single-seaters; I feel endurance-type racing suits me. I'm quite consistent with my lap times and I can bring that to British GT.

British GT also brings a lot of crowds and interacting with them is going to be really cool. Plus my end goal is Le Mans so this is definitely the first step of the ladder to the pinnacle. If I were to end my career doing Le Mans that would be something. I would love to do it in any class: Hypercar, an LMP2 or a GT car.

I got interested in motorsport via my dad, as he was really interested in it and did a bit of racing himself, in Ginetta G40 actually supporting British GT. So that's where my interest came about, I was at the tracks before I was racing.

My own racing started with going to my local indoor karting track when I was around nine years old, which I really enjoyed. Later we started to go outdoor karting in the more faster karts against more competitive grids, so that was the point where I thought this is definitely something that I want to do. Since I was probably 11 years old the only thing I wanted to do is become a professional racing driver.

I then moved on to Ginetta Juniors for two years with Elite Motorsport: I finished fifth in the standings in my debut year aged 14 and third last year aged 15.

In Ginetta Juniors you have to go with a mindset of things are going to go wrong, because you're chucking 20-plus 14-to-16-year-olds onto some of the largest tracks in the UK. But it teaches you everything you need to become a top-level racing driver, such as

racecraft and mindset. There are parts where you might feel under pressure and it's all part of it, and it really teaches you to become the best driver you can.

The Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 RS Clubsport I'll be racing this year is a brand-new car; we'll have it in February. I've driven the older one and that's incredible and the next one is going to be even better. Compared to Ginetta Juniors the Porsche was really different, I had the confidence on the brakes with the ABS and the raw pace down the straight was really cool.

Parker for me is the perfect team. They're well-established and have got such good people and the facilities as well. It's a match made in heaven. Chris will continue to mentor me too. I consider him as a real part of the family and he's taught me everything I know to date. He's the pinnacle of teaching for a junior.

I'm going to be 16 years old throughout the whole of this season and I'll be one of the youngest drivers in British GT history. But that's better in my opinion because as much as I've still got years to learn I also want to prove that I can hit the scene straight away and hopefully make a mark.

Coming from Juniors to British GT, some may think it's quite a big step so as soon as we get testing underway I aim to just be quick as I possibly can. I'm going to be coming up against some really top-level drivers and even a few from last year's Junior grid so I'm going to want to prove my worth. Consistency is my strength – it shone through Juniors where I was consistently on the pace – but I like to think I've got fire in my belly as well.

We just want to do as best as we possibly can this year and I don't see why we can't go out there and try and win the whole thing. Learning will be my pure aim yet my thought process throughout a race weekend will be to win as much as I can and maybe come out with the championship.



Hopkins: "Ginetta Juniors teaches you everything"

"I don't see why we can't go out there and win the whole thing"

WHAT'S ON

YOUTUBE



Recollections of Reims are there to enjoy on YouTube

Seinfeld's George Costanza once lamented the consequences of worlds colliding. But worlds colliding isn't always a bad thing.

The eclectic range of YouTube accounts that I frequent includes one called The Tim Traveller. In this (don't judge me) the eponymous Tim explores various oddities – related to transport, borders, architecture or pretty much anything else – usually in, or near, France where he is based.

Yet with the drop of his most recent video worlds indeed collided for me, as in it Tim visits

none other than the classic Reims-Gueux circuit, sometime host of the French Grand Prix.

You're probably aware that, while the classic road track was abandoned by racing several decades ago, its pit building, grandstand and other things live on hauntingly next to the Champagne region highway, and anyone can visit them for free.

We discover in the video how chance saved the buildings from the usual bulldozers plus how, these days, it all is not only being preserved but returned to how it looked in its heyday. It turns out too that

Reims-Gueux is pronounced nothing like I thought (as Tim's a fluent French speaker I'm prepared to take his word, or rather his pronunciation, for it).

I've no idea if Tim is a motorsport fan, but his Reims tour is all presented with his usual passion and detail, with lots of lovely footage. Listen out for his appropriate musical accompaniments too.

You can watch it: at youtube.com/watch?v=lkh6GxOM-yI or by searching: 'The Abandoned 1950 Grand Prix Track That's... Still There'.

Graham Keillor

TV GUIDE

After what seems a blink since the 2021 season ended, the World Rally Championship's 2022 brave new world is starting today (Thursday) with the Monte Carlo Rally. And BT Sport has live coverage and more.

Today The WRC Magazine previews the Monte with a half-hour programme starting at 0130hrs on BT Sport 3 as well as a more hospitable 1130hrs and 1830hrs over on BT Sport 2. There's more for today's early risers too with, still on BT Sport 2, a look at 2021's WRC season at 0615hrs-0715hrs.

While on Monday on BT Sport 2 at 1900hrs-2000hrs we have a

wrap of this latest Monte. It's also shown on Tuesday.

There's yet more rally fun in a couple of unlikely places this week as well. On Wheeler Dealers: Stripped Down on Quest early on Sunday at 0230hrs-0300hrs they seek to make and sell a Ford Escort rally car, while Dave on Tuesday at 1600hrs-1700hrs shows a Top Gear wherein they meet the Race2Recovery rally team for military amputees.

Sky Sports F1 continues its plod through last year's F1 season, showing every round in full. Today it goes Dutch, with Zandvoort's first practice

LIVE TV

WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP MONTE CARLO RALLY

SS1: Thursday, 1900hrs-2030hrs, BT Sport 2
SS15: Sunday, 0900hrs-1000hrs, BT Sport 1
SS17: Saturday, 1100hrs-1230hrs, BT Sport 2

starting at 1130hrs.

Eurosport 2 has a review of 2021's Formula E season on Monday at 2000hrs-2100hrs, shown again on that channel on Tuesday at 2125hrs-2230hrs.

Graham Keillor



The Monte Carlo Rally will get plenty of airtime

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Molly Coe, aged 11, enjoyed a trip to the Plum Pudding meeting



David Harbey reflects on Monaco



R.A.C. action, by Richard Salisbury



A classic, from Bob Sketchley



Dean Chilvers enjoyed F1 testing

NEXT EDITION

OUT THURSDAY, JANUARY 27 2022

EXCLUSIVE READERS' Q&A PETER DUMBRECK



Scottish star tackles the Motorsport News readers' posers



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Full report from the Monte Carlo Rally

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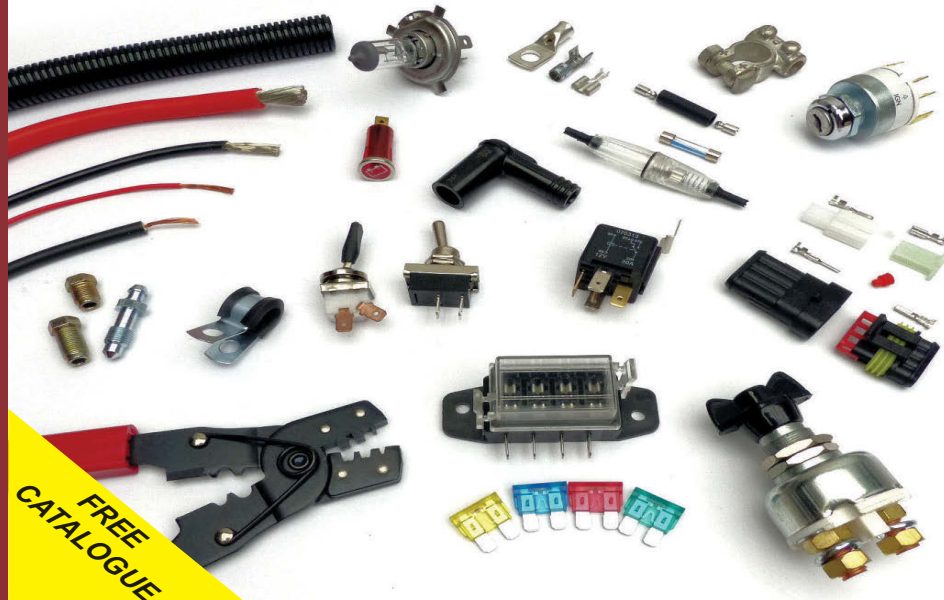
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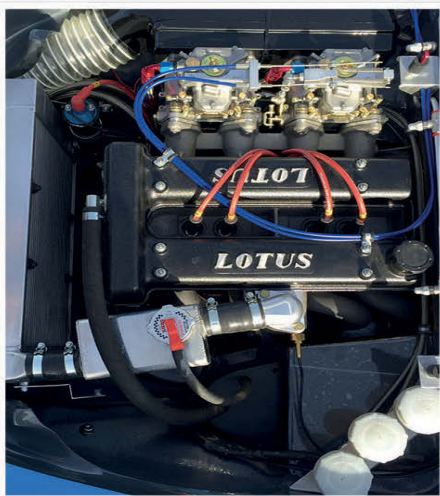
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NEW CUPRA FORMENTOR.

LET YOUR HEART CHOOSE FOR ONCE.

YOU CAN CHOOSE THE STRAIGHT PATH, LIKE ALWAYS.
IT'S EASIER, LESS TROUBLE. OR YOU CAN CHANGE
COURSE AND CHOOSE ANOTHER WAY, ONE THAT YOU'D
NEVER HAVE THOUGHT TO TAKE. AND IF THAT FEELS
RIGHT, THE NEW CUPRA FORMENTOR IS FOR YOU.

DRIVE ANOTHER WAY.

Official fuel consumption for the CUPRA Formentor range mpg (litres/100km):
31.4 [9.0] – 235.4 [1.2]. CO₂ emissions 33-203 [g/km].

*Figures shown are for comparability purposes; only compare fuel consumption and CO₂ figures with other vehicles tested to the same technical procedures. Figures may not reflect real life driving results. Data correct at May 2021.

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